

**JOINT FORCES STAFF COLLEGE
JOINT ADVANCED WARFIGHTING SCHOOL**



**Moral Competence for the Joint Warfighter:
The Missing Element in Defense Transformation**

By

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Joint Advanced Warfighting School in partial satisfaction of the requirements of a Master of Science Degree in Joint Campaign Planning and Strategy.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Joint Forces Staff College or the Department of Defense.

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“American military service is based on values that U.S. military experience has proven to be the **bedrock of combat success**. These values adhere to the most idealistic societal norms, are common to all the Services, and represent the essence of American military professionalism.”

Joint Publication 1
Joint Warfare of the Armed Forces of the United States

ABSTRACT

The United States Department of Defense is currently engaged in a massive effort to transform America's military for the challenges of the Twenty-First century. This transformation effort is focused on making structural, intellectual, and cultural changes to the world's greatest military force, but it has neglected the one area of change essential to military success in the information age: moral transformation.

An individual and organizational moral transformation is required because the United States Military, the cornerstone of America's preeminent world position, is suffering from an insidious internal decay which threatens its warriors, the heart of the profession of arms, and the nation's future security. The Core Values revolution of the 1990s has failed to have any significant impact on this institutional malaise and now only serves to create a false sense of security regarding the institution's moral condition. The current moral condition of the Services is the result of inadequate individual moral development for America's warriors and the combination of institutional apathy and cultural duplicity. The general acknowledgement of the need for moral aptitude by Service leadership has not generated sufficient change in the shallow, disconnected programs currently in existence. This institutional abdication of moral responsibility and failures to correct cultural problems directly undermines the moral competence of the joint warrior, which can have significant negative impacts on trust and confidence in the organization, the establishment of domestic and international support, and operational effectiveness. In line with current Department of Defense Transformation efforts, it is time to initiate a Joint Ethical Transformation Campaign to improve moral competence and ethical cultures within all of the Services.

**Respectfully dedicated to my comrades in arms across the Services and
around the globe**

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Chapter I

A Force for Good?

And all the time--such is the tragic-comedy of our situation--we continue to clamor for those very qualities we are rendering impossible ... In a sort of ghastly simplicity we remove the organ and demand the function. We make men without chests and expect of them virtue and enterprise. We laugh at honour and are shocked to find traitors in our midst. We castrate and bid the geldings be fruitful.¹

C.S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*

In the 2005 State of the Union Address, President Bush proclaimed that “our Nation is serving as an active force for good in the world.”² This message is both a continuation of America’s political tradition and a desired objective for future statecraft, but its inclusion places a clear moral obligation on those forces doing most of America’s acting in the world today: the American military. While proper moral conduct has long been an expectation of our Armed Forces, the transition to the information age, the impact of globalization, and the changing nature of warfare has placed a new premium on the importance of gaining and maintaining the moral high ground. If the United States Military intends to achieve and maintain this valuable terrain, to truly serve as a force for good in the world, the Services must initiate a transformation effort that will eliminate the current duplicitous* moral culture and focus on the moral development of the joint warfighter.

What’s Wrong?

The American military’s current challenges in this arena are the result of the core problems of institutional moral neglect and individual moral incompetence. The nature of the problem may not be catastrophic, but it is pervasive; it may not have been intentional, but

* There are two concepts for the term duplicity. The use of duplicity and duplicitous throughout this work refers to the “state or quality of being two-fold or double” instead of the concept of deliberate deceptiveness. The accusation focuses on a split between institutional practice and precept and the need to address this dichotomy.

it is being institutionalized; and while some may dismiss it as a peripheral concern, the issue has serious implications for each service member and the core of the profession of arms. This problem is not surprising because it mirrors a prominent thread of American history that has marked the almost continuous struggle between efforts to foster ethical conduct, at home and abroad, and the means for enabling that conduct. The pendulum in this struggle seems to have moved against moral development in the last half century as society's emphasis on moral development has declined and the drive for moral clarity has been overcome by the unending drive for individual freedom. The obligations of responsibility that naturally accompany freedoms are being intentionally separated and moral restraints are being lost in the process. The foundation of moral knowledge and practice, which has provided the baseline of moral development for America's warriors, is in decline and old assumptions on the acceptance and practice of traditional values by incoming personnel are no longer valid. For the American military, the moral deficiencies inherent in the workforce are being exacerbated by an increasingly ethically corrosive institutional culture working counter to its espoused values and the absence of an intentional moral development process which leaves individual warriors morally stunted. This problem is then further aggravated by the lack of institutional awareness of the problems and an apparent unwillingness to address its root causes.

The most powerful component of President Bush's "force for good" is in danger of becoming a bastion of technical skill that is hollowed by a culture of moral indifference and individual moral incompetence. Whether at home in garrison or participating in combat operations around the globe, the joint warfighter is regularly confronted with the disconnect between moral rhetoric of leadership (precept) and the realities of the current military culture

(practice). As an example, integrity is at the same time advocated and subjugated as good intentions give way to budgetary pressures, operational timelines, and appearances for the commander. A cultural obsession with the bottom line has led to a pattern of product trumping principle and, yet, at the same time leadership seems baffled at why accountability is failing. This institutional hypocrisy makes a constant mockery of core values and leads to the dismissal or reduction of moral considerations to mere niceties, which are great for the classroom but of dubious value in the “real world.” This conflict, between preaching and practice, causes internal organizational friction and degrades the bedrock of trust and cohesion essential to a fighting force. The moral rectitude that has been one of America’s greatest domestic and international strengths has devolved to questionable moral capability, and the conscience and values of the American warfighter are casualties of the process.

These moral problems deserve attention because America depends on the competence of its warriors now more than ever. Moral considerations cannot be ignored because they affect every warrior, every day ranging from the most challenging dilemma in the realm of combat to the simple acts of honesty and respect for others. As Joint Publication 1, Joint Warfare of the Armed Forces of the United States points out, “American military service is based on values that US military experience has proven to be the bedrock of combat success. These values adhere to the most idealistic of societal norms, are common to all the Services, and represent the essence of American military professionalism.”³ This cornerstone of joint doctrine goes on to say, “Morality should not be a matter of legality, but of conscience. Moral behavior is essential for gaining and maintaining the positive worldwide reputation of American fighting men and women as well as the confidence and support of the American people.”⁴

The military operating environment requires it, joint doctrine advocates it, and yet nothing in the current transformation effort addresses it. C.S. Lewis's excerpt from The Abolition of Man at the front of this section shows the futility of having performance expectations when sufficient resourcing and individual development has not been provided. In a vicious cycle of false expectations, the military neglects its responsibility to provide for adequate moral development while, at the same time, hoping for consistent conduct within the organization. When these performance disparities surface, the Services exacerbate the situation by attempting to cover the gaps with institutional, instead of individual, remedies. The Services, in turn, adopt values initiatives, ad hoc ethical programs, and share lofty moralistic speeches, that receive minimal attention and have the cumulative effect of dropping rocks in the ocean. Although well-intentioned, the inadequacy of these efforts leaves the individual with the choice of either completely neglecting moral development or attempting to complete the process on their own. As would be expected, most individuals who recognize this need realize they have neither time, nor instruction, nor motivation to achieve these goals and quickly decide to abandon the effort, leaving the rhetoric permanently disconnected from reality.

The Path Ahead

These statements, and the arguments that follow, levy severe and significant charges on our military establishment and the profession of arms, which cannot, and should not, be taken lightly. In an effort to explain and provide justification for these claims, this research presents a series of critical arguments starting with the creation of a common understanding of the terms and terrain needed for the ensuing discussion. This initial argument will provide clarity to misused and misunderstood terms and promote the concept that morality is a

ubiquitous dimension of human behavior that affects every warrior every day on many different levels. This foundation will then be used to defend an argument for the essential interdependence between morality and military service for the American warfighter. This viewpoint will be discussed based on the contention that morality is a desired and essential restraint on the conduct of military action. The last of these conceptual arguments will be a discussion of the importance of moral capability as a required skill in achieving military competence. This section will provide a clear understanding of the concept of moral skill and provide an argument for it as a required element of military development and certification as a professional.

The ground work of the early arguments paves the way for an evaluation of the current military ethical environment and a presentation of four core ethical problems requiring attention. Although non-empirical due to the absence of any substantive data available in the Services, the assessment will paint a disconcerting picture of the current military moral condition. Observations and analysis from as far back as 1970 are included in this section to show the systemic nature of the problems and highlight the continuity of the core causes. After presenting the five critical aspects of the military's problem, the next section examines and critiques the implementation of core value programs across the military services. This examination highlights the concept and application failures of core values and argues that morality must be addressed in a more holistic approach at the organizational and individual levels.

The dismissal of core values as a feasible solution effectively clears the slate for new approaches to moral development and leads to the discovery of several major obstacles which consistently impede moral reform efforts. Each barrier to moral development is

examined to show why it exists and how it effectively hampers efforts to impact individual warriors or the military as a whole. The barriers discussion is then challenged by a presentation of multiple rationales for moral reform designed to provide the impetus for organizational change. This motivation for moral improvement is then wedded to specific recommendations presented in the form of an ethical campaign plan with two component strategies. This plan provides the general methodology and intent for achieving the desired end-state of moral change. Finally, the conclusions from this research effort are provided and selected recommendations for additional study are offered.

Caveats & Qualifications

In any research effort, it is often just as important to qualify what will not or cannot be done as it is to present the actual research. In this vein, there are several important caveats that must be addressed up front. First, although this research effort focuses entirely on the American military, the moral challenges in this organization and their root causes must not be viewed in isolation from the whole of American society. As moral competence and core developmental sources, such as the basic family unit, values education in schools and organized religion, falter within the larger populace, the American military is directly impacted through societal influence and the influx of new personnel. The intent of this effort is to focus on transforming the military organization without ignoring the impact of societal influence but also without attempting to rectify it.

A second qualification that must be addressed is the absence of empirical data and the use of subjective assessment. While every effort has been made to address general trends and avoid unsubstantiated claims, the complete void of moral assessment data within the Services makes it impossible to provide the type of objective assessment that one would

apply to readiness or even physical fitness. The intent of this argument is to create awareness of moral deficiencies in the military without relying on a specific “smoking gun” or body of evidence. In fact, the sheer absence of the assessment data is, in itself, evidence of moral neglect this thesis targets for transformation.

As a third caveat, it must be made clear that this work is not designed to provide a prescriptive approach to morality in the military. The focus of this effort is on individual and organizational moral development and not focused on the specifics of content. While the specific content is crucial, it is somewhat useless without having the organizational desire to instill it and a comprehensive moral development program in the Services to execute it. The intent is to emphasize the importance of moral development and expose its current absence in education, training, and culture without delving into the specific curricula which should be left to the professional military ethics instructors.

The final clarification for this work regards the use of observations and data covering the last forty years. While America’s military has undergone massive changes since the Vietnam era, most of these changes have involved organization and technology and the underlying moral problems have remained relatively constant. The continuity of these problems and the typical military approach to dealing with them are critical factors to consider in developing a new approach to moral development. In addition to this, the less-politically correct environment of several decades ago fostered more robust works in topics of ethics and morality, which typically provide more depth in their analysis than many contemporary works.

The initial outlay of the basic moral problems, bounded by these qualifications, and combined with the argument methodology provides a solid roadmap for the discussions that

follow. Taken together, this approach will present a compelling case that current service development plans are wholly inadequate and demonstrate a basic failure to “train and equip” the joint warfighter for the intense moral challenges faced from the comfort of garrison to the crucible of combat. It is time for America’s warrior professionals to realize that moral transformation is even more essential to the future viability and vitality of the military than structural and intellectual transformation.

What you’re doing speaks so loudly that I can’t hear what you’re saying.⁵

Len Marrella, *In Search of Ethics*

CHAPTER NOTES

¹ C.S. Lewis, *The Complete C.S. Lewis Signature Classics: The Abolition of Man* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2002) 275.

² George W. Bush, “2005 State of the Union Address” (speech presented to the United States of America via media broadcast in January 2005) (accessed at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/02/20050202-11.html> on 12 Sept 05) 1.

³ Joint Publication 1 *Joint Warfare of the Armed Forces of the United States* (accessed at <http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jpcapstonepubs.htm> on 14 Oct 05) III-4.

⁴ Joint Publication 1, III-6.

⁵ Len Marrella, *In Search of Ethics: Conversations with Men and Women of Character* (Sanford, FL: DC Press, 2001), 1.

Chapter II

Surveying the Terrain

The term ‘moral’ tends to be used for more practical elements … and ‘ethical’ tends to be used for more abstract and theoretical elements … but the distinction is by no means hard and fast. Some philosophers and theologians have drawn a distinction between the moral and the ethical. They have drawn such a variety of different distinctions; however, that to use any of them invites confusion with the others.⁶

“Ethics” - Online Ethics Center

While many believe that ethics and morality are commonly understood, it is rare that this understanding is truly common. With over 4000 years since the first recorded discussions of ethics, it is not surprising that the body of information on this subject is quite robust. Unfortunately, that same time period has allowed the most basic concepts to be clouded through repeated interpretation, redefinition, and almost constant debate. To create a common understanding, if only for the length of this work, it is necessary to cover a few concepts. This is not a simple exercise in semantics because the confusion of terms has been one of the leading culprits in causing moral development to be sidelined in military education. The definitions below provide clear delineation between the two concepts and should ensure clarity in the discussion that follows.

Ethics – a branch of philosophy which studies and evaluates human conduct in the light of moral principles and values⁷

Morality – a system of principles and judgments shared by cultural, religious, and philosophical concepts and beliefs, used by humans to make value decisions (value decisions include both determining whether given actions are right or wrong and making assessments of good and evil)⁸

One additional definition that must be provided is moral competence. This concept will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter IV, but the centrality of this concept, as a skill and a condition, dictates its presentation here.

Moral Competence – 1) the combination of ability and willingness to spontaneously, flexibly, and decisively recognize, assess and respond to the morally relevant features of a situation, bringing on-line a whole repertoire of response patterns that are adapted on the spot to fit the situation as it unfolds; 2) the condition of being properly or sufficiently qualified in moral development (also referred to as ethical skill, ethical know-how, and moral maturity).⁹

Another piece of groundwork that must be covered is gaining an understanding of the vast and ubiquitous nature of the ethical domain. Although some like to believe that moral concerns lie at the margins and only come into play when there are significant dilemmas to be considered, this dismissive view quickly loses credibility when one begins to see the pervasive nature of value judgments in all aspects of human existence. Moral considerations are fundamental to every human interaction and, therefore, must be included in every facet of military leadership, planning, and mission execution. Moral considerations affect every warrior, every day ranging from the most challenging dilemma in the realm of combat to the simple acts of honesty and respect for others. Decisions made to inflate performance evaluations, embellish readiness reporting, or overlook minor regulation violations may seem trivial at the time, but these actions lie at the core of individual moral judgment. The thread of individual morality and organizational ethics ties our legal, professional, personal, relational, and spiritual worlds together in an all-encompassing restraint on improper behavior.

Prominent military ethicist, Dr. James Toner highlights the pervasiveness of ethics by saying “Every leadership decision but the most mundane involves ethical judgment.”¹⁰ This observation echoed the findings of the U.S. Army’s 1970 “Study on Military Professionalism,” which concluded, “The subjects of ethics, morals, technical competence, individual motivation, and personal values systems are inextricably related, interacting, and mutually reinforcing. All of these aspects of the professional climate, taken together, produce a whole which is greater than the sum of its separate, component parts.”¹¹ Even the recent Secretary of Defense 2003 Summer Study, “The Military Officer in 2030,” pointed out that “morals and ethics should never only be taught in ethics classes. That makes morality something apart. There are moral questions inherent in everything.”¹² This realization that every human interaction involves moral judgment has not been successfully applied to our institutional processes. Attempts to improve individual pieces of the military ethical puzzle without examination or understanding of the wider implications are both naïve and dangerous, and have directly contributed to the piece-meal, disconnected ethical policies currently in place throughout the military. Instead of a comprehensive approach to military ethical development, the Services currently have disparate, isolated, ineffective programs that lack a common purpose and foundation and have little connection in clear moral principles. Armed with a common understanding of ethics and morality and an appreciation for the comprehensive nature of the ethical domain, this study will now examine and emphasize the essential relationship between individual morality and military service.

CHAPTER NOTES

⁶ “Ethics” from the Online Ethics Center Glossary (accessed at <http://onlineethics.org/glossary.html#anachE> on 14 Oct 05).

⁷ Ethics Definition adapted from “Ethics” in *The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition* Copyright © 2003, Columbia University Press. Licensed from Columbia University Press. All rights reserved. (accessed at www.cc.columbia.edu/cu/cup/ on 3 Jan 06)

⁸ Morality Definition adapted from “Morality” in Wikipedia (accessed at <http://www.answers.com/morality&r=67> on 3 Jan 06).

⁹ Jennifer C. Wright, “Is Ethics a Skill?: Towards a Developmental Account of Ethical Know-How” (accessed at <http://www.uwyo.edu/moffett/department/wright.pdf> on 30 Sep 05) 10.

¹⁰ Toner, James H. “Leadership, Community, and Virtue” (Joint Forces Quarterly, Spring 1996) 103.

¹¹ *U.S. Army War College Study on Military Professionalism* (Carlisle, PA: Army War College, 30 Jun 1970) i.

¹² “The Military Officer in 2030,” Secretary of Defense 2003 Summer Study (accessed at <http://www.loanational.org/alamo/Library/The%20Military%20Officer%20in%202030.pdf> on 2 Jan 06) slide 57.

Chapter III

Morality and Military Service

War is a profession by which a man cannot live honorably; an employment by which the soldier, if he would reap any profit, is obliged to be false, rapacious, and cruel.¹³

Niccolo Machiavelli

To those who maintain that in war one does whatever is necessary to win, I must respond that they have no ethic at all: without moral purpose war is simply the exercise of destructive power against other human beings in the pursuit of self-interest.¹⁴

Anthony Hartle, *Moral Issues in Military Decision Making*

One of the greatest challenges for those who advocate for the moral improvement of American warriors is disproving the false-dichotomy of military service and moral conduct represented in Machiavelli's quote above. This section addresses this problem in an effort to show that the two concepts are not opposed to each other but are, in fact, necessarily complimentary for a military force serving a democratic society.

Throughout history, a unique tension has existed between the desired and acceptable standards of normal human conduct and the apparent demands of violence and cruelty during times of conflict. This tension has led many prominent leaders to conclude that morality and military service are fundamentally incompatible, or at least that morality has little utility during open hostilities. This claim of incompatibility has severe consequences because it not only removes one of the few effective restraints on warfare but also because war is such a pervasive activity in human existence. The fact that “less than 300 of the last 3,500 years of recorded history have been free of war” shows that the overwhelming majority of human history would be relegated to a Hobbesian state without the imposition of moral safeguards.¹⁵ Fortunately, this is not the case. The role of morality has been slowly and consistently

interjected into the realm of combat and has served mankind well in ensuring the avoidance of collective descent into a pattern of unconstrained atrocities.

Although often concealed in today's politically correct culture, there seems to still be a significant remnant who ascribe to Machiavelli's exclusionary moral thought in the military profession. This mindset focuses on the impractical aspects of moral consideration and consequently "throws the baby out with the bath water." Sometimes these beliefs are espoused in the colorful terms of military necessity and national interest to make the subjugation of moral concern seem more legitimate. Regardless of how they are presented, the result of their persistence is the perpetuation of the conflict between moral conduct and military action. For some individuals, the constant tension between the demands of moral conduct and the requirements of military service leads to complete abandonment of one concept in favor of the other; this results in the adoption of pacifism or Machiavellianism.* However, viable solutions are rarely found in the extremes, and it is wise to be cautious of any who would advocate the consideration of moral principle or power politics to the exclusion of the other.

Another unfortunate aspect of this debate is the perpetuation of the total war mentality through the actions and philosophies of military heroes who were failed moral exemplars. The much venerated Clausewitz has helped foster a skeptical attitude toward the value of morality for over a century. His sarcasm is palpable when he comments, "Attached to force are certain self-imposed, imperceptible limitations hardly worth mentioning, known as international law and custom, but they scarcely weaken it ... To introduce the principle of moderation into the theory of war itself would always lead to logical absurdity."¹⁶ From the

* The political doctrine attributed to Machiavelli, which denies the relevance of morality in political affairs and holds that craft and deceit are justified in pursuing and maintaining power.

Clausewitzian standpoint, Martin Cook points out, “the military exists not to serve grand and universal moral principles, but simply to sacrifice itself for the political ends of the state ... all rhetoric about the high moral purposes of military service constitute a verbal smoke screen behind which lies a very unpleasant truth.”¹⁷ While the military realists may be saying ‘Amen’ to these comments, one should give pause to consider what the American military would become if this ‘principle of moderation,’ which Clausewitz scoffs at, were removed.

Two other examples of the casting aside of morality warrant our attention. The first, by General Curtis LeMay is instructive on how initial struggles for moral fortitude are quickly eclipsed when faced with the horrors of war. He states, “I used to be tormented in losing my airmen ... But to worry about the morality of what we are doing—Nuts. A soldier has to fight. We fought.”¹⁸ While this tough-minded language may appeal to the warrior’s heart, this disregard for the implications of personal and professional action are cause for serious concern. Consider the second example, provided by Herman Goering, which shows the all-to-convenient line that is often drawn between peacetime and wartime standards. “What the devil do you mean, morality?—word of honor? Sure, you can talk about word of honor when you promise to deliver goods in business. But when it is the question of the interests of the nation! ... then morality stops.”¹⁹ It is this mentality of moving the affairs of national interest into a realm without moral restraint that enabled the morally reprehensible conduct by Germany in World War II. How these two individuals adopted moral exclusion may appear to “free the hands” in time of conflict, but the freedom of action this provides is insignificant compared to its potentially degenerating affect on the warrior elite.

Fortunately, the sheer horror of large scale combat has forced the majority of warriors and nation-states toward a more balanced reconsideration of the relationship between morality and military service. Although this shift has not placed primacy on moral considerations, it has fostered the development of the international laws of war, codes of conduct, Geneva Convention, and the military tribunal system. Collectively, these work to place important constraints on national and individual behavior. Although tension still exists between the demands of conscience and struggles for conquest/survival, there has been a general realization, captured by Richard Gabriel in To Serve with Honor that “Only ethics can place the destruction of warfare in perspective and prohibit men from using violence beyond reason.”²⁰ Roy Guttman in his work Crimes of War further expounds on the necessary relationship between morality and military service. He argues that morality was “intended to establish, even in war, a firebreak between civilization and barbarism.”²¹ Based on this understanding, the tension appears to be more complementary than contradictory and the relationship seems more like a balance of powers than opposing forces. Moral conduct provides humanity with an enforceable constraint on an otherwise seemingly uncontrollable human activity.

This interdependence between moral competence and military service appears prominently in recent American military publications. In 2001, the United States Army Posture Statement stated, “They [soldiers] must have the character to make split-second, life or death decisions in the tense confrontations characterizing recent peace-keeping operations.”²² In his February 2004 Sight Picture, former Air Force Chief of Staff, General John P. Jumper stated “The true foundation of character is not merely knowing the right thing to do, but also having a firm conviction and the courage to act upon such knowledge. This

conviction requires solid moral fiber and ethical strength ..."²³ In the Secretary of Defense's 2003 Summer Study "The Military Officer in 2030", it was acknowledged that "The importance of teaching, inculcating, training, and testing officers on ethics goes without saying."²⁴ Most recently, on February 8th of this year, the leadership of the Department of the Navy released their objectives for 2006, which included "Reinforce ethics as a foundation of conduct within the Department of the Navy" as one of the Service's five objectives.²⁵

From these examples, it would appear that the tug-o-war between realism* and idealism** is slowly turning into a collective effort focused on creating the mature moral warrior. This is an effort that could generate much-needed consensus in three key areas: (1) the inevitability of conflict; (2) the preeminence of national interest; and (3) the inescapable requirement for moral conduct. In the end, a win-win situation is created by having fully capable warriors, who are prepared for the horrors of combat but trained to safeguard the values and standards of the nation and the profession. National objectives are achieved and our consciences are soothed.

Unfortunately, the endorsement of individual moral development has not translated into the policies or training necessary to make this vision a reality. The written and spoken moral exhortations from the Pentagon have ended up on squadron or battalion bulletin boards around the world but have not been transformed into institutional changes. Consequently, America's warriors continue to be challenged with a morally corrosive culture, long before they ever get to the battlefield. The challenge for current leadership is to go beyond simply acknowledging the value of moral conduct to the point where specific actions are taken to

* Realism in this context is means a concern for fact or reality and rejection of the impractical and visionary; pragmatism

** Used to mean the act or practice of envisioning things in an ideal form.

enable this behavior. The importance of this behavior will be shown in the next section which focuses on the critical, and too often overlooked, connection between a warrior's technical competence and their individual moral competence.

CHAPTER NOTES

¹³ Niccolo Machiavelli quotation (accessed at <http://www.greatest-quotations.com/search.asp?quote=Honor&page=12> on 2 Jan 06).

¹⁴ Anthony E. Hartle, *Moral Issues in Military Decision Making*, (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1989) 229.

¹⁵ Yuri Koszarycz, “Ethics and War” (accessed at www.mcauley.acu.edu.au/~yuri/ethics/war.html) in January 2001) 1 (Note: website has since changed and course material is no longer published on the website).

¹⁶ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Michael Howard and Peter Paret eds. (New York: Random House, 1993), 83-84.

¹⁷ Martin L. Cook, *The Moral Warrior: Ethics and Service in the US Military*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004) 40.

¹⁸ Curtis E. LeMay and MacKinlay Kantor, *Mission with LeMay: My Story* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1965).

¹⁹ Herman Goering as quoted in R. L. Holmes, *On War and Morality* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989).

²⁰ Richard A. Gabriel, *To Serve with Honor: A Treatise on Military Ethics and the Way of the Soldier* (Westport, CT: Greewood Press, 1982) 227.

²¹ Roy Guttman and David Rieff, eds. *Crimes of War: What the People Should Know* (New York: WW Norton & Co, 1999) 8.

²² U.S. Army, *The 2001 United States Army Posture Statement* (accessed online at <http://www.army.mil/aps/01/default.htm> on 2 Jan 06) 46.

²³ John P. Jumper, 2004 Sight Picture (accessed at <http://www.af.mil/library/viewpoints/index.asp> on 18 Aug 05) 1. (Note: Since Gen Moseley has succeeded Gen Jumper as the AF Chief of Staff, Gen Jumper’s documents are no longer listed on the page)

²⁴ “The Military Officer in 2030” slide 57.

²⁵ Department of the Navy Memorandum dated 8 Feb 2006, “Department of the Navy Objectives for 2006” accessed at www.navy.mil/palib/people/secnav/2006_don-objectives.pdf on 15 Mar 06.

Chapter IV

Moral Skill and Military Competence

Ethical behavior and military competence are closely interrelated, and inadequate performance in one area contributes to inadequate performance in the other.²⁶

Anthony Hartle, *Moral Issues in Military Decision Making*

Despite massive technological advances, America's military might still hinges upon its most basic element: the human weapon system. It is the man or woman in the loop that shoulders the burden of decision, generates the vision, and provides the motivation and leadership necessary for military success both on the battlefield and in the training environment. Further, it is the moral and technical competence of the individual soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines that determines their capability to meet these significant demands. This section continues to unfold this argument by examining what constitutes moral skill, and consequently competence, for the warfighter, what requirements and expectations exist for the military professional, and the interdependence of moral and technical competence.

Moral Development Concepts

The concept of competence in the moral realm has been an evolving topic which goes by several titles. Ethical skill, ethical know-how, moral competence, and moral maturity are all terms that have been used to describe individual proficiency in dealing with moral issues. The specific capability is best described as “the ability to spontaneously, flexibly, and decisively recognize and respond to the morally relevant features of a given situation, bringing on-line a whole repertoire of response patterns that are adapted on the spot to fit the situation as it unfolds.”²⁷ In her work “The Expertise of Moral Character,” Darcia Narvaez

presents an excellent argument showing moral character as a developable skill and explains how moral development can be achieved through intentional training and practice.²⁸ Iordanis Kavathatzopoulos, in his work “Ethical Competence Training for Individuals and Organizations,” echoes Narvaez’s point and goes on to provide a thorough discussion of the process of generating ethical skill.²⁹ Jennifer Wright argues persuasively, in “Is Ethics a Skill: Towards a Developmental Account of Ethical Know-How,” that the ethical development process mirrors that of the majority of other basic human personal skills.³⁰ Finally, Peter Bowen, in his article “Beyond Corps Values,” effectively closes the case by showing how the mastery process of education, training and experience used to develop competence in driving, flying, and other apprentice-type skills can and should correlate directly with the moral development process.³¹ In the absence of adequate opposing arguments, these, and the myriad other writers to include Kohlberg’s “Theory of Moral Development”*, demonstrate that intentional development is indeed the correct path to take in this challenging endeavor. This skill is a key enabler for judgment and decision-making that is absolutely essential in a profession that deals in the capital of human lives and the fates of nations.

To facilitate the understanding of the relationship between military service and moral development, Figure 1 depicts how the concept of moral competence fits into the moral development domain of military service. The bold line starting in the lower left corner represents a notional individual’s level of moral competence from birth through entry into the military to the present time. The deviation arrows that branch away from this line initially

* An excellent, and easily accessible, source for a overview of Kohlberg’s work is W.C. Crain’s 1985 work *Theories of Development*, pp. 118-136, published by Prentice-Hall.. The focal chapter “Kohlberg’s Stages Of Moral Development” is available online at <http://faculty.plts.edu/gpence/html/kohlberg.htm>

and at later stages represent potential paths of improvement or decline that the individual might follow depending upon the relative strength and impact of the two primary forces: moral improvement/reinforcement efforts and moral gravity. Moral improvement/reinforcement includes military, religious, and family/social influences in the form of education, training, and experience that elevate the individual's moral capability. Moral gravity represents the cumulative impact of moral apathy, due to lack of concern, atrophy, due to lack of moral engagement, and tolerance, due to lack of

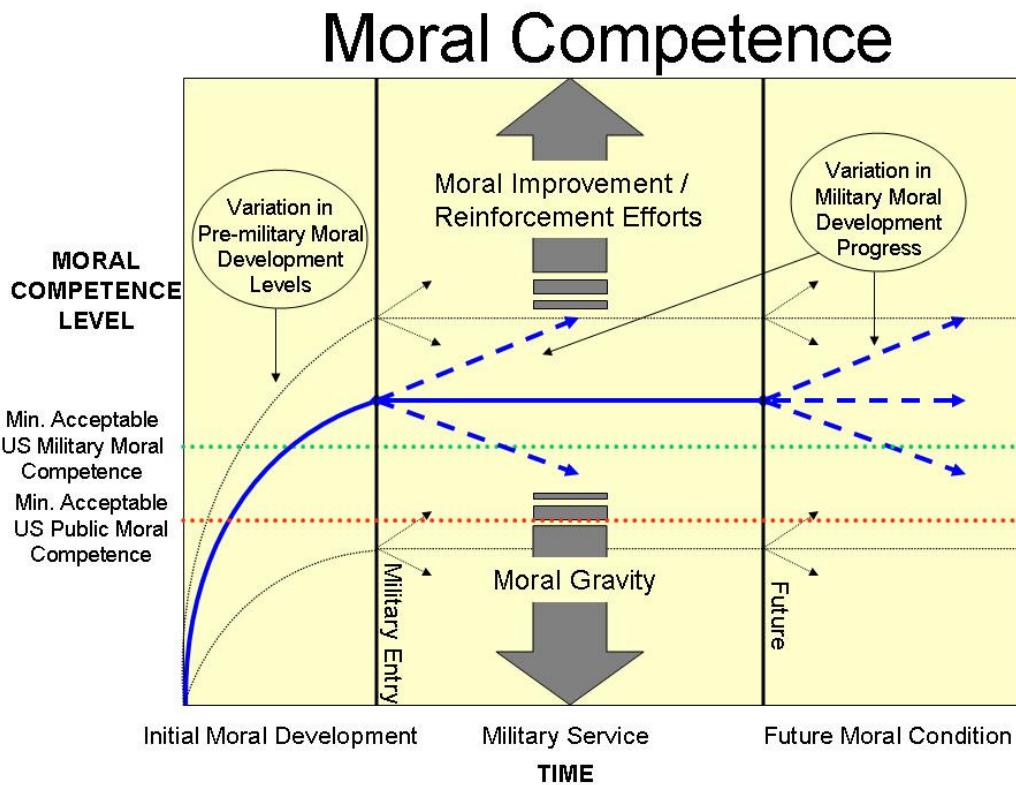


Figure 1

moral courage. Individual moral competence ebbs and flows over time because of the constant influence and interaction of these two forces. The corrosive impact of moral gravity can be mitigated by continuous development efforts, but it can never be eliminated. The presentations of the minimum military and public moral competence levels are provided to

show both the spectrum of individuals that enter military service and the dangerous implications of moral gravity unrestricted by effective moral improvement/reinforcement efforts. This depiction is comparable to one of physical fitness levels with or without an exercise routine or foreign language skills with or without regular utilization. This representation provides the lens necessary to examine and assess moral competence in today's warfighters.

Necessity or Nicety?

It is obvious from this review that moral skill is helpful, but is it really a requirement? Is it a specialized capability, like legal expertise, required in a portion of the Service, or does it, like physical standards, apply to each warrior? Can a soldier or sailor bypass ethical development and still be professionally competent? These questions, and their associated answers, are critical to understanding how moral skill relates to the individual warrior. To gain this understanding, this section reviews the professional and doctrinal admonitions for improvement, the requirements levied by the trust of the American public and the demanding operating environment, and the potential consequences of creating American warriors devoid of moral skill.

Demand for Moral Skill

In a modern free society, technical prowess devoid of moral competence is simply unacceptable. The lessons of recent history, ranging from Lt William Calley in Vietnam, to the Tailhook Convention and Aberdeen Proving Grounds in the 1990s, to the actions of Sergeant Major of the Army Gene McKinney, and recent firing of Air Force Brigadier General Hassan, reveal that openly deviant moral behavior will not be tolerated regardless of time in service or record of performance. Despite the apparent drift of America's moral

compass, it is readily apparent that exposure of misconduct, especially in areas of public trust, still leads to rapid condemnation. In modern military service, technical competence cannot and should not be considered apart from its interdependent moral components. One of America's pre-eminent military ethicists echoes his agreement in stating, "soldiers who will not think through moral problems, contending that ethical concerns belong only in churches or classrooms, will fail their profession and their people every time they must determine what should be done, in war or in peace."³² A portrayal of the operational demand for moral skill in the military is provided by K.F. McKenzie, Jr., in his article "Deputies of Zeus." He states, "The professional officer fights an ethical war by ensuring that tactical and operational procedures are morally and militarily sound: by training efficiently and aggressively so that the forces he commands can effectively employ those procedures to defeat the enemy and by providing a sound moral and ethical base for commanders at all levels to draw from."³³ If these performance expectations are to be realized, they must be sufficiently resourced or they will quickly become untenable.

The very nature of military service and the demands of the profession cannot long support members who are unwilling or unable to inculcate skills that are essential to its continued existence. Renowned Air Force ethicist Malham Wakin reaffirms this sentiment in saying that "Important human values are inextricably associated with the military profession in such a fashion as to make the proper pursuit of the military function impossible without their institutional inculcation."³⁴ In his famous lectures on the profession of arms, Sir John Winthrop Hackett highlighted the unique requirements of military service. He states, "A man can be selfish, cowardly, disloyal, false, fleeting, perjured, and morally corrupt in a wide variety of other ways" and serve perfectly well in many walks of life, "but cannot be a good

sailor, or soldier, or airman.”³⁵ Hackett’s claims of exclusivity may be a bit overstated (at least one would hope given our dependence on the moral competence of those in other professions), but it effectively emphasizes the special requirement that is placed on moral conduct in the military. Although these philosophical arguments can be persuasive, a brief look at current joint doctrine will show that evidence of the requirement for moral competence goes well beyond the ruminations of a few esteemed military thinkers.

Joint Values in Joint Warfare

Despite the current absence of adequate institutional reinforcement for the existing joint values, American military doctrine is very clear on the essential nature of specific moral skills in the joint Warfighting arena. The capstone publication, Joint Publication 1 “Joint Warfare of the Armed Forces of the United States,” points out that “American military service is based on values that US military experience has proven to be the bedrock of combat success. These values adhere to the most idealistic societal norms, are common to all the Services, and represent the essence of American military professionalism.”³⁶ The lessons of Clausewitz are echoed in the doctrine’s cautionary comments, “War is a human undertaking that does not respond to deterministic rules.”³⁷ The publication emphasizes the importance of five key Joint Warfare Values: Integrity, Competence, Physical Courage, Moral Courage, and Teamwork. “When the members of the Armed Forces of the United States internalize and embody these values of joint warfare, their attitude about joint warfighting produces a synergy that multiples the effects of their individual actions.”³⁸ Although not a ringing endorsement, the ensuing discussion of the specific values highlights the criticality of moral competence. It describes integrity as “the cornerstone for building trust … a fundamental requirement for building effective teams.”³⁹ Of competence, it says

“The American people and multinational partners expect US military competence in every aspect of warfare.”⁴⁰ It describes moral courage as “essential to military operations” and argues that “morality should not be a matter of legality, but of conscience.” It continues by stating “Moral behavior is essential for gaining and maintaining the positive worldwide reputation of American fighting men and women as well as the confidence and support of the American people, a basic source of American military strength.” Under the value of teamwork, the publication addresses its subcomponents of trust and confidence by saying they “are central to military unity of effort” and that they “do not result from good feelings or devout wishes. Trust is based on the mutual confidence resulting from honest efforts to learn about and understand the capabilities each member brings to the team.”⁴¹ It is very clear from this capstone doctrine publication that the key attributes and skills which are developed under the banner of moral competence are essential to the American joint warfighter.

Special Trust

Aside from doctrinal encouragement, the profession of arms demands moral competence because its members are granted special liberties and unique responsibilities in the preservation of the state. The military system is empowered by the wealth of the nation, its ranks are filled by the sons and daughters of its citizens, and it is authorized to take lives and destroy property in efforts to protect the citizenry and promote their collective interests. Former Vice Admiral A.K. Cebrowski highlighted this unique expectation in his comments at one of the Naval War College’s Ethics Conferences. “Military leaders are entrusted with responsibilities of awesome proportions, up to and including matters of life and death. Leaders must be prepared, in times of great stress, to make critical decisions based upon the fundamental moral foundations upon which this nation was built.”⁴² While Admiral

Cebrowski's comments are accurate, his lack of description of the "awesome proportions" and "great stress" make it easy for those unfamiliar with the full spectrum of operations and realm of combat to assume that it is demanding but not truly unique. The more forceful language of Alexander Berkman provides a vivid depiction of the wartime environment and the corrosive impact it can have on those without a solid ethical foundation. He writes, "War paralyzes your courage and deadens the spirit of true manhood."⁴³ It degrades and stupefies with the sense that one cannot possibly be responsible for one's actions in such an environment. The risk of operating in this environment, highlighted in Berkman's characterization, reveals the extent of the trust members of a nation must have in its warriors. This harsh description is obviously not indicative of the day-to-day military environment, but there are aspects of the routine military environment that will be looked at next because they further reinforce the demand for moral competence.

Challenging Ethical Environment

The ethical operating environment for the military professional is truly unique. As Anthony Hartle points out in Moral Issues in Military Decision Making, "The environment in which members of the military must operate poses a severe threat to consistent moral behavior."⁴⁴ "A leader has no one to look to for advice on such decisions. He must do what he thinks is best, but he must not fool himself as to the consequences of his choice. War is not a series of case studies that can be scrutinized with objectivity. It is a series of stark confrontations that must be faced under the most emotion-wrenching situations."⁴⁵ As if this were not significant enough, the severity of the military ethical arena is only surpassed by the diversity of it. The spectrum of operations, as it is often referred to, ranges from compassionate humanitarian actions all the way to the intentional killing of enemy

combatants on the battlefield. The enormity of the military challenge was captured by former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor during her acceptance speech for the Thayer Award at West Point in early 2006. “The nation has placed an enormous burden upon our armed forces. We have asked you to be our soldiers and our statesmen, to be our combatants and our conscience. This burden has been placed upon you with only limited guidance.”⁴⁶

The awesome diversity in requirements the military spectrum presents, coupled with the aforementioned severity, still only covers a portion of the warrior’s ethical realm. The multidimensional roles that military members fill in garrison outside of a contingency or combat environment must not be omitted in this consideration. For many, the daily, smaller-scale ethical challenges arising from under-resourced and over-tasked life in a sluggish bureaucracy are much more daunting and persistent, if not more significant, than those faced on the battlefield. These challenges range from cultural pressures to engage in “creative” budgeting, institutionalized “corner-cutting” in operations, and the toleration of “minor” ethical deviations “for the good of the mission.” Finally, as members of the American social structure, service members also face the behavioral responsibilities as spouses, parents, and fellow citizens. Altogether, these responsibilities, professional, institutional, governmental, familial, and societal, are all leveraged on the same individual in varying degrees but with similar expectations. Moral judgment is expected in all of these realms, but in the professional realm it must go beyond an expectation to a requirement.

Before concluding the discussion of how the challenging ethical environment reinforces the demand for moral competence in American warriors, one other contribution

needs to be examined. In his 1991 article, K.F. McKenzie, Jr. offered the following insightful dialogue on the nature of morality and military service:

The officer plies his trade poised on a dialectic tightrope between opposing poles of peace and war. The rope is made of intellect and selfless willingness to act in violence when necessary. Below, the pit of amorality looms. A fall is caused by losing sight of the responsibility for ethical behavior. As in no other calling, the warrior cannot be separated from his actions. The warrior *is* the act. The ethical behavior of the officer is on display before the entire world: no misstep or miscalculation will go unnoticed, and an error may carry with it an enormous cost in life, including the officer's own. Equilibrium is maintained by doing the right thing, the ethical thing. There is in all of us a moral compass, a visceral understanding of what is right and wrong.⁴⁷

While I would argue that McKenzie's pit is that of immorality and not amorality, his depiction of the intense environmental demands is frighteningly accurate and should make it clear that individuals seeking to operate in this arena must be prepared.

Avoiding the Worst Possible Outcome*

A final area of consideration when looking at the requirement for moral competence in military professionals are the obligations attached to service in the profession of arms. The future viability of military service as an honorable profession hinges upon the Services' acknowledgement of the obligation for moral competence and their enabling of its achievement. It must be remembered that "Military ethics forms the core for a profession that is engaged in a very special task sometimes requiring the sacrifice of human life as well as the deliberate taking of human life. Given the role of the soldier, it is clear that some code of values is necessary to give a human and humane dimension to the soldier's awesome tasks and responsibilities."⁴⁸ The worst possible outcome occurs when the lack of collective moral competence results in permanent damage to the profession. The position of unique privilege and trust that America's military occupies in society is only guaranteed through constant

* This subtitle is borrowed from the title of Thomas Anderson's article "Avoiding the Worst Possible Outcome" from Infantry Magazine Jan/Feb 2005 Vol. 94 Issue 1 Pg 42

preservation efforts by the membership. Additionally, we must remember that “Since Americans fight to protect basic human values; they should strive not to disregard those values in fighting to protect them.”⁴⁹ It is critical for military leadership to continuously refresh and re-emphasize the significance and moral obligations of each warrior’s oath to the Constitution. There is a drastic difference between “The military leader who views his oath of office as merely a contractual arrangement with his government” and “the leader who views that oath as his pledge to contribute to the common good of his society.”⁵⁰ The leadership challenge is to establish a clear understanding in the minds of everyone in the profession of exactly what the Constitutional obligation means in order to eliminate the former and enable the latter in hopes of preserving the profession.

In summary, it should now be clear that moral skill is a separate and distinct skill set that is essential to the professional warrior, both at home station and abroad, for the successful navigation of moral hazards. Adoption and inculcation of this skill set is, in itself, a moral obligation for every warrior to be certified as a qualified member of the profession of arms. To enforce this obligation, the same approach of unwavering standards that are applied to the mental and physical qualifications of our warriors must be levied on the moral capabilities to ensure a level of professionalism that goes beyond brawn and brains. This obligation to achieve ethical competence is part of the relationship with society in being a uniquely entitled representative of the nation. Our success in empowering the development of ethical competence may well be the most important task we have in creating our nation’s warriors. As Richard Gabriel warns us, “... the effectiveness and success of a military force rests far more on the moral quality of its men than it does on its technical expertise.”⁵¹ While the proportionality of technical and moral competence can be argued, it should now be clear

that neither can be considered sufficient in the absence of the other. With this established, it is now time to take a closer look at the current moral condition of the American military.

The line between incompetence and immorality is a thinner one in the military profession than in almost any other human vocation.⁵²

Malham Wakin, *War, Morality and the Military Profession*

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²⁶ Hartle 38.

²⁷ Jennifer C. Wright, "Is Ethics a Skill?: Towards a Developmental Account of Ethical Know-How" (accessed at <http://www.uwyo.edu/moffett/department/wright.pdf> on 30 Sep 05) 10.

²⁸ Darcia Narvaez, *The Expertise of Moral Character*, presented at The Whitehouse Conference on Character and Community, 19 June 2002 (accessed at <http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/character/narvaez.pdf> on 3 Jan 06) 1.

²⁹ Iordanis Kavathatzopoulos, "Ethical Competence Training for Individuals and Organizations."

<http://www.nd.edu/~isbee/papers/Kavathatzopoulos.doc> accessed on 3 Oct 05

³⁰ Wright, 10.

³¹ Peter S. Bowen, "Beyond Corps Values" <http://atlas.usafa.af.mil/jscope/JSCOPE99/Bowen99.html> accessed on 1 Sep 05.

³² James H. Toner, *True Faith and Allegiance: The Burden of Military Ethics* (Lexington, KY, University Press of Kentucky, 1995) 129.

³³ K.F. McKenzie, Jr., "Deputies of Zeus", Proceedings July 1991, 61.

³⁴ Wakin xi

³⁵ John Winthrop Hackett, *The Military in the Service of the State*, War, Morality and the Military Profession, 2d Ed. (Boulder, CO, Westview Press, 1986) 119.

³⁶ Joint Publication 1 *Joint Warfare of the Armed Forces of the United States* (accessed at <http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jpcapstonepubs.htm on 14 Oct 05>) III-4.

³⁷ Joint Publication 1 *Joint Warfare of the Armed Forces of the United States* (accessed at <http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jpcapstonepubs.htm on 14 Oct 05>) III-4.

³⁸ Joint Publication 1 *Joint Warfare of the Armed Forces of the United States* (accessed at <http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jpcapstonepubs.htm on 14 Oct 05>) III-7.

³⁹ Joint Pub 1 III-4.

⁴⁰ Joint Pub 1 III-5.

⁴¹ Joint Pub 1 III-4-7.

⁴² Arthur K. Cebrowski, cover letter for the Professional Military Ethics Conference at the Naval War College, 16 March 1999.

⁴³ Alexander Berkman quotation accessed at

http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/a/alexander_berkman.html on 3 Jan 06.

⁴⁴ Hartle 1.

⁴⁵ Hartle 4.

⁴⁶ Sandra Day O'Connor, "We Need a Clear Set of Rules to Reaffirm Our Values as a Nation," (Excerpt from Thayer Award Acceptance Address at West Point), Army Magazine, Jan 2006, 12.

⁴⁷ K.F. McKenzie, Jr., "Deputies of Zeus," Proceedings July 1991, 61.

⁴⁸ Gabriel 34.

⁴⁹ Peter L. Stromberg, Malham M. Wakin, and Callahan, Daniel. *The Teaching of Ethics in the Military*, (Hastings-on-Hudson, NY: Hastings Center, 1982) 6.

⁵⁰ Malham M. Wakin, *The Ethics of Leadership II*, Morality and the Military Profession, 2d Ed. (Boulder, CO, Westview Press, 1986) 206.

⁵¹ Gabriel 7.

⁵² Malham Wakin ed., *War, Morality and the Military Profession* 2d Ed. (Boulder, CO, Westview Press, 1986) xi.

Chapter V

Current Assessment: **Pervasive, Insidious Threat + Inattentive, Reluctant Organization**

The world has achieved brilliance without wisdom, power without conscience. Ours is a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants. We know more about war than we know about peace, more about killing than we know about living.⁵³

General Omar N. Bradley

The eloquent indictment above, issued during an Armistice Day speech in Boston in 1948, was especially painful coming from the standing Army Chief of Staff, future first Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and our nation's last 5-star general. Unfortunately for us, General Bradley's charge of ethical retardation is equally, if not more, true today and even more consequential because of the challenges of the information age operating environment. The challenge facing the American military today is whether or not it is willing to acknowledge a core internal problem that is painful to discuss, challenging to resolve, yet fundamental to the very service that it provides to the nation.

In the 1950 Army Character Guidance Program manual, then Army Chief of Staff, General J. Lawton Collins stated, "The true strength of an army lies in the moral character and spirit of its soldiers. A man needs a sense of individual dignity and responsibility. He must know and believe in the ideals of his country, and he must be willing to protect and perpetuate them."⁵⁴ The status of this strength should be a constant focus of the American military's attention, but this unfortunately is not the case. In the current environment, Status of Readiness and Training System (SORTS) reports and mission accomplishment metrics seem to dominate leadership's attention resulting in precious little time spent assessing the force's moral aptitude. Despite the potential pain of this investigation, the concern for the

current health and future viability of the institution should serve as sufficient motivation for an honest assessment of the current moral condition.

In regards to these kinds of assessments, Americans have an unfortunate tendency to talk in extremes. Many advocates for change couch their concerns in the language of crisis because it seems to be the only way to be heard. Sadly, the collective wolf-crying often serves only to cloud the key issues, desensitize leaders to legitimate concerns, and make everyone skeptical of the individuals making the case. Military ethics has experienced this phenomenon over the last quarter century as religious and cultural Henny-Penny's have declared the pending doom of the military profession and the imminent collapse of the basic American value system. In an unfortunate irony, the use of "the sky is falling" moral language and cries for immediate action seem to have generated a deaf ear in the very institution these efforts are trying to protect. It is indeed a daunting challenge to avoiding sensationalism, while still advocating the importance of the issues.

Although non-empirical in nature, this assessment is neither hypothetical nor simply theoretical. The observations and conclusions embedded in this research were, whenever possible, substantiated by official survey results, organizational behavior study, and specific incidents. Additionally, the absence of quantifiable data is somewhat balanced by the recurring evidence of moral inadequacy that appears daily in the headlines captured in the Early Bird.* However, the key point in prefacing this assessment is that the need for development advocated here is predicated on the demands of the environment and the profession and is not dependent upon statistical measurements. The need is inherent in the calling and work environment; this assessment simply reveals some of the key conditions

* The Early Bird is an electronic collection of daily defense related news stories that are compiled from national and global sources to provide snapshots of relevant issues receiving press over the last 24-48 hours. This document can be accessed at <http://ebird.afis.mil>.

that make the need for development even more critical. It is important to note that the conclusions presented here are intended to apply to all of the military services, but there are definite variations in the applicability of specific conclusions and the severity of individual problems between each branch. The intent is to focus on the general moral challenges across the Services in hopes of developing solutions that will benefit all of America's warriors regardless of the relative progress of their Service when compared to the others. There is ample room for improvement across the board, especially in the five core problem areas to be discussed.

Uncovering Causes & Consequences

It is often true that our current condition is best understood by looking back at our history. With this in mind, an important precursor to the current assessment was the “Study on Military Professionalism” that was conducted thirty-six years ago by the Army War College at the direction of the Army Chief of Staff. Like a long-overdue dental exam, it revealed the extent of the decay that had occurred due to neglect. The report characterized the Army’s climate as “one in which there is disharmony between traditional, accepted ideals and the prevailing institutional pressures.”⁵⁵ Even after months of high-level analysis, it was concluded that “The primary causative factors are unclear. It is difficult to distinguish between cause and effect.” However, it was concluded that the causes were almost entirely internal to the service. “There is widespread feeling that the Army has generated an environment that rewards relatively insignificant, short-term indicators of success, and disregards or discourages the growth of the long-term qualities of moral and ethical strength on which the future of the Army depends.”⁵⁶ The study further noted that “The pervasiveness of this climate … indicates that the situation is probably not self-correcting.”⁵⁷

It was also found that “barely perceptible environmental changes which can be tolerated day by day, but which accrete to counter-productive forces over the long haul” were causing systemic problems in the service.⁵⁸ This study caused a great deal of alarm in the Army and served as the burning platform to enable some important changes to Army culture. Unfortunately, the core components of this problem, the lack of individual moral development and institutional duplicity, were not adequately addressed and, more importantly, were not just limited to the Army. As a result, these core organizational problems have continued over time and are having increasingly corrosive effects on the entire military establishment.

Despite the alarming conditions and trends uncovered by the Professionalism Study, it appears that none of the Services have engaged in any comprehensive ethical self-assessments since that effort over three decades ago. The absence of moral assessment by the Services creates a moral blind spot for senior leadership. While this lack of investigation should create feelings of insecurity, it has instead appeared to contribute to a misguided confidence in the ethical health of the force. In the realm of ethical well-being, ignorance truly is not bliss. In spite of this lack of official research by the Services, evidence of institutional ethical health is available to anyone who is interested; it is simply a matter of taking the time to examine common practices and behaviors at the unit level of each Service. The symptoms of moral decay are present in each of the service cultures, imbedded in many institutional processes, and evident in the feedback of the junior officers. Sometimes the problem is evidenced in ugly scandals or captured in climate surveys, but most often this malaise is more insidious as it slowly undermines the integrity of our vaunted institutions with a strategy of death by a thousand cuts. The telltale signs of moral erosion are evident in

the side-stepping of regulations, the failure to enforce standards, fiscal impropriety and dishonest communications. While this decay may be seen as simply indicative of moral concerns in American culture at large, the impact on the profession can not, and should not, be so easily dismissed.

A recent Gallup poll surveying public opinion on the biggest problems facing our nation today placed ethics and morality near the top of the list for only the second time in half a century.⁵⁹ Some may discount this due to Harris Interactive's polling conclusions that the military is still the most trusted institution in America.⁶⁰ However, it is dangerous to seek comfort in the relative ranking of trustworthiness, especially when integrity is a standard that is not graded on a curve. Additionally, Malham Wakin points out in his research that "When 1,400 key Americans were queried concerning the three most important characteristics of leadership, 76.1% listed 'moral integrity'" while 55% listed courage, 52% common sense, and only 5% charisma. He observes that "Perhaps what we witness here is the classical conception of wishing to appear noble and good while in reality acting in ways we believe to benefit our own self-interest."⁶¹ Regardless of whether Wakin's assessment of intent is correct, the evidence of the waning moral health of the military is available to anyone willing to take the time to look at it. However, the unfortunate reality is that the current state of moral development in the military is too often treated like a bad habit that few are willing to acknowledge and even fewer are interested in discussing. This absence of action and lack of acknowledgement of the condition has effectively served as institutional consent to the growth of the problem. This process of normalizing deviancy from accepted standards of behavior, or ethical erosion as it is often termed, acts on the Services like an anesthetic parasite. It slowly destroys the institution's moral foundations while, at the same time,

numbing the membership to internal decay. It causes the damage without raising any general alarm by those in the organization.

In the spring of 2001, I was unintentionally exposed to first hand evidence of the corrosion process when, over a three month period, I conducted a retention survey of over 1300 company grade officers across the Air Force representing 32 of the 35 core Air Force Specialty Codes.* The survey yielded many interesting results, but, in particular, I was very intrigued by the written critiques of Air Force policies, culture, and leaders that undermined the Service's first core value--Integrity First. Although not included in every response, there was a recurring theme of leadership or cultural influences working counter to moral growth. Individuals expressed frustration with everything from false reporting on capability ratings to politicized commanders willing to say anything for the next promotion to the enforcement of standards. For those that have read the 1970 report on Army Professionalism, here are a few examples to show the eerie similarities. "The AF asks a lot of us, and if we see our superiors unwilling to lead by example, we wonder why we are obliged to abide by the rules they preach." "I want to know why immediate leadership changes our honest answers to what they think the boss wants to hear." "People are so frightened that a single mistake will ruin their chances of promotion that we've bred a corps of politicians in the higher ranks."⁶² While these comments only represented a portion of the population, they portrayed a recurring theme, which was not exactly a positive indicator for the internal health of an organization. This survey was not intended to be an ethical assessment tool, but it is hard to ignore some of the glaring moral concerns. Although the 1970 report focused solely on the Army and my survey focused on the Air Force of 2001, the organizational and cultural similarities between

* This data was collected as part of a retention data collection effort for the Under Secretary of the Air Force. The survey focused mainly on AF Company Grade Officer's sources of discontent in an effort to focus the AF's retention efforts.

all of the services make the containment of these problems just to these particular services at these times improbable. It is more likely that the undercurrent of moral neglect and dysfunction has been slowly gaining a foothold in all of the Services simultaneously.

In his paper “Duty, Honor, Country: Practice and Precept,” Lewis Sorley points out that people “need a supportive environment to be the best they can be, not one that undermines their integrity and routinely penalizes honesty and straightforwardness.”⁶³ He argues that “Forced to operate in such an environment, to decide daily whether to opt for appearance over substance and searching for some way to reconcile the contradictions, it is obvious that many will feel powerless to affect the ethical climate and will elect simply to leave the profession.”⁶⁴ Unfortunately, neither their premature departure nor their continued endurance of the contradiction has any ameliorating affects on the problem. McKenzie’s concept that “Ethical behavior in any profession stems from fundamentals, and the greater the gap between what we know to be right and what we actually say and do, the greater the potential for violating ethical norms” seems to have been all but forgotten.⁶⁵

It is time to realize that we have a problem that is creeping in under the military radar. The problem has not garnered adequate attention because it is not a major budgetary, infrastructure, or personnel concern that anyone is tracking. Instead, the Services are faced with a much more insidious threat that thrives expressly because of its gradual onset and subtle effects. In his lecture “‘Turning’ Backward: The Erosion of Moral Sensibility”, Professor John J. McDermott stated that the “baleful undoing of the moral fabric is unsung because it rarely, if ever, is accompanied by an announcement, pronouncement, or even acknowledgement that it has taken place.”⁶⁶ He goes on to compare the process as “a form of spiritual arteriosclerosis, accompanied by a hardening of the heart.”⁶⁷ This affliction did not

take hold over night and it will not be a quick fix. In order to begin a process of restoration, we must first examine the core causes and sustaining forces for the disease.

Core Problem #1 – Politicization and Careerism

The first major factor is the politicization of the officer corps and careerism. A characterization of this phenomenon is best seen in the generic description of a unit commander provided in the 1970 Professionalism report. It stated, “... an ambitious, transitory commander—marginally skilled in the complexities of his duties—engulfed in producing statistical results, fearful of personal failure, too busy to talk with or listen to his subordinates, and determined to submit acceptably optimistic reports which reflect faultless completion of a variety of tasks at the expense of the sweat and frustration of his subordinates.”⁶⁸ For those that think this was just a Vietnam-era problem, similar examples were reported from a July 1997 briefing prepared for the Center for Army Leadership on an internal culture study. The briefing stated “the Army's current culture forces some officers to behave in ways that are contrary to the Army's stated values.”⁶⁹ A paper discussing this never-released study points out that concerns over “a ‘zero-defects’ environment coupled with a perceived reluctance on the part of senior leaders to acknowledge the problems” was reported. “Example quotes from numerous soldiers would indicate that truth has been sacrificed in favor of careerism and that senior officers are not held in high regard.”⁷⁰

Former Secretary of the Navy, James Webb, showed his disgust with the “career worm” when he said it was turning the profession into a “gutless bureaucracy” focused on “pushing papers and taking a paycheck.” He exclaimed that “young officers did not come into the Navy with this attitude. The circumstances of their careers have inflicted it upon them.”⁷¹ Senior officers are not oblivious to the condition, but through a process of

acclimatization most seem to gradually shrug it off as just part of making the grade in a bureaucracy. One anonymous respondent commented, “Commanders are not martyrs. We did not make it this far by telling it like it really is.”⁷² The extent of this problem, which borders on paranoia in some senior leaders, can be seen in many who are very reluctant to put anything in emails or stated comments that might possibly ever reveal their dissent with the party line. It is time to seriously reconsider the environment that has been created.

Coast Guard Captain P.A. Turlo, in his article “Ethics and Career Fear – Is there a Link?” wrote, “Neither honor, integrity, nor courage is fostered in an atmosphere where junior officers are reluctant to speak honestly for fear of displeasing a superior, whose opinion may later determine whether he will be allowed to continue in his chosen career.”⁷³ As former Admiral and prisoner of war James Stockdale states, “a real ‘player’ quickly sees that anonymous selfless service in support of a superior to whose position he himself may aspire, respect for enlisted with little ability to affect his future promotions, and loyalty to peers with whom his relationship has become one of no-room-in-the-lifeboat-every-man-for-himself competition, do not pay.”⁷⁴ Even for those who are not smitten by the career worm, the highly competitive bureaucratic environment makes daily moral conduct difficult. As Commander D.A. Goward points out, “Duty, honor, and integrity are pitted against loyalty in a lose-lose contest when superiors are forced to agonize over how to report honest and expectable mistakes made by promising JOs [junior officers] in the course of learning difficult and dangerous jobs without ensuring their non-selection.”⁷⁵ It is time to remember the advice that “It is unwise to create and perpetuate work environments that make ethically responsible behavior into acts of moral courage.”⁷⁶ Careerism and politicization are

unfortunate realities that must be acknowledged and addressed as both a cause and sustaining force of the morally corrosive culture in the military.

Core Problem #2 - Toleration

The second major ethical problem facing the military profession is the issue of excessive toleration of unethical or immoral conduct. While many view toleration as simply an outcropping of careerism, this viewpoint does not stand up to scrutiny since many of the culprits are more worried about peer loyalty than below-the-zone promotions. Toleration is a tough concept that typically does not receive a great deal of attention outside of the honor code discussions at the military academies. This portion of the code represents an uncomfortable concept to many because it requires action beyond the control of one's own individual behavior. However, this clause is critical to the functionality of the entire code because it unites all of the organization's members in a bond of collective responsibility. This same honor concept is supposed to apply once commissioned service begins because the common trust it fosters is even more critical in the “real world” than it was at the academies. Instead of taking action to discourage toleration as an unhealthy practice, service cultures tend to encourage it by putting more emphasis on loyalty to their peers and through disparaging treatment of informants and “do-gooders.” The propensity for “looking the other way” or down-grading the significance of infractions is rampant to the point that most do not even think about it any more. As Ralph Keyes writes in The Post-Truth Era: Dishonesty and Deception in Contemporary Life, “One reason we’ve lost our way in the ethical woods is that we’ve adopted such an accepting, nonjudgmental stance in which no one is held accountable for being dishonest, or for much of anything. Along the way we’ve become too concerned about our emotional well-being, not enough with our ethical well-being.”⁷⁷ The gradual rise

of humanistic concern and the ever-present influences of selfishness are working together to dismantle peer accountability as one of the professions greatest ethical safeguards.

In this discussion, it is imperative that the concept of toleration not be confused with social tolerance. Individual toleration of different races, religions and cultures is essential in maintaining cohesion in a diverse force and should be promoted. The unwanted variant of toleration is the unwillingness to enforce standards, whether due to individual timidity, excessive consideration or other causes; that self-replicating phenomenon that can have disastrous effects on the heart of an institution. In many ways, this concept of tolerance can be looked at as simply the absence of moral courage. As the prominent ethicist Rushworth Kidder states, “... values count for little without the willingness to put them into practice Without moral courage, our brightest virtues rust from lack of use.”⁷⁸ Kidder argues that there is a “three-stranded braid that defines morally courageous action – commitment to principles, awareness of the danger in supporting those principles, and a willing endurance of the danger.”⁷⁹ This braid stands little chance of holding us above water when our three strands are made brittle by a commitment of convenience, a careerist phobia of the dangers, and a resultant aversion to endure those dangers. Toleration of immoral activity comes in many widely accepted forms in the military. It may arise in the knowing inflation of performance reports because of the rationalization that honest evaluations only hurt our personnel. It may come from the dismissal of regulations as impractical or cumbersome in order to obtain consent for a more “expeditious” approach. In fact, the Services repeated failures to match regulations with the mission leads to ethical compromise with complete indifference and possibly even smugness.⁸⁰ “Resistance to ‘required’ activities occasionally surfaces as noisy defiance, but it more frequently takes the form of sullen noncompliance

occasionally accompanied by falsification of records.”⁸¹ Our unwillingness to directly confront individuals, who violate institutional standards, especially when in positions of leadership, plays a major role in reinforcing the undesirable behavior. A couple of examples of these practices can undermine endless admonitions to “do the right thing.” This problem is exacerbated and institutionalized when officers who repeatedly fail in these areas are rewarded and promoted. Toleration of immoral conduct by the institution and individual leaders is fostering a corrupt culture and undermining the moral development efforts of subordinates.

Core Problem #3 – Post-Modern Attitudes

The Twentieth Century bore witness to the emergence of post-modernism* and its strong desire to ‘evolve’ beyond the historic traditions of society. This philosophy, along with the rise of moral relativism, has had a significant influence on the mindsets and ethical attitudes of military recruits. This rise of self-defined morality has served to create an environment that: (1) Throws more and more issues into the gray area to promote individual choice; (2) Denies the ethical nature of key issues; (3) Seeks to completely sever the ties between religious morality and personal and professional ethics. The danger, as Keyes points out, is that “... we are better able to get away with deceiving others, more likely to be let off the hook if exposed, and in the process convince ourselves that no harm’s been done.”⁸² The existence of post-modern attitudes must be challenged intelligently to reveal its incompatibility to committed service to traditional American values and principles.

* Postmodernism is used here, somewhat disparagingly, to describe attitudes, sometimes part of the general culture, and social changes which are held to be antithetical to traditional systems of philosophy, religion, and morality.

Taken in isolation, the post-modern attitudes may seem inconsequential. However, when they are combined with the internal pressures of a large bureaucratic organization like the American military, their impact is truly significant. The article “Leadership: Facing Moral and Ethical Dilemmas” points out that “The larger an organization, the more complex the strategy and operations, the easier it becomes to stretch standards and change the numbers to reflect what is desired, rather than what is. Meeting the numbers seems more desirable than sticking to reality. Besides, one might reason that ‘reality’ or ‘truth’ is really just a question of which version, which perspective.”⁸³ This becomes even more compelling when you combine this with research from 1998 that found “85.9 percent of managers claim that they draw their moral standards at work from the expectations perceived in the work environment...The morality and ethics of the modern workplace are a product of the leaders of the organization.” “When employees have no clear picture of the moral or ethical stance of the organization, they tend to operate at the lowest perceived level.”⁸⁴ Although several of these examples come from the civilian business sector, the similarities in organizational structures, behavior, and culture across the military-civilian boundary, make these lessons equally valuable. In the end, the increasing adoption of post-modern attitudes matters greatly because they significantly impact individual response to moral instruction and influence the nature and pattern of individual actions.

Core Problem #4 – Tyranny of the Bottom-line

The fourth causal factor of Service ethical woes is a results-dominated bottom line ethic. This approach places a heavy emphasis on ends and tends to put little scrutiny on the ways and means of achieving them. While great for statistics and sometimes required in combat, this approach is woefully inadequate to the daily operations in a large bureaucracy.

The military reinforces this approach with its constant focus on products over process and emphasis on statistics without regard to the operating environment. If awards and promotions are handed out on style instead of substance, it does not take a billboard sign for the membership to learn that cutting corners is okay as long as it gets results. As a result, the moral stalwarts of the organization are quickly faced with the decision to play ball or play the pariah.

In a slightly different context, this prevailing mindset creates practices that focus on achieving ends without putting the necessary constraints on potential means. As Dr. Toner points out, “Decent, discreet soldiers who would not for a moment consider lying, cheating, or stealing for reasons of self-enrichment might very well do exactly those things in the name of the good of their service.”⁸⁵ Whether in the interest of one’s Service or one’s self, this approach is very dangerous because, as its name states, all other considerations are swept aside in the rush to the bottom line. When confronted with the moral implications of our actions, a common tendency is to follow the lead of, then young French General, Paul Aussaresses in Algeria in 1965. In his response to a Colonel who was uncomfortable with the extreme measures (a.k.a. torture) used to obtain strategic information to support the French counterinsurgency, he responded “... to carry out the mission you’ve given me, I must avoid thinking in moral terms and only do what is most useful.”⁸⁶ The inability of individuals to hold on to moral concern and focus on the bottom line is indicative of a situation in which the ends have become permission for unchecked ways and means. For those who have read the Schlesinger, Taguba and Fay reports* from Abu Ghraib, it appears

* Taguba report was prepared by Maj. Gen. Antonio M. Taguba on alleged abuse of prisoners by members of the 800th Military Police Brigade at the Abu Ghraib Prison in Baghdad. Available at <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/4894001/>

that this is the same kind of environment that was created there, resulting in gross breaches of conduct and serious international condemnation. While many want to dismiss this event as a simple leadership failure or just the actions of a few bad eggs, a thorough review of the documentary evidence shows an obvious case of how the demand for results, in the form of actionable intelligence, quickly became a bottom line that overshadowed all levels of moral restraint.*

While these may be tough examples to relate to, milder versions of this amoral, and sometimes immoral, realist ethic can be seen on many military installations around the globe during the run up to major inspections or end-of-year spending sprees. It shows up in personnel management when concern for self outweighs the requirement for accurate assessment or status reporting. In the same way, creative budgeting and regulation side-steps can become suddenly acceptable as long as the justification remains focused on “the good of the team”. In scenario after scenario, expediency emerges as the arch enemy of moral principle in military service. This is not to say that creativity is at odds with moral conduct, but it does mean that commanders must constrain the means by which desirable ends are achieved. The frenetic pace of operations, combined with constrained budgets and tired personnel, creates an inviting atmosphere for cutting corners (a.k.a. moral compromise),

(Con't) - Fay report was result of the AR 15-6 Investigation of the Abu Ghraib Detention Facility and 205th Military Intelligence Brigade by LTG Antony R. Jones and MG George R. Fay. Available at <http://www4.army.mil/ocpa/reports/ar15-6/AR15-6.pdf>

Schlesinger report was the result of the DoD's Independent Panel to Review Detention Operations produced by the Honorable James R. Schlesinger, the Honorable Tillie K. Fowler, the Honorable Harold Brown, and Gen (ret) Charles A. Horner. It is available at http://www.msnbc.com/modules/legal_docs/abuGhraib_finalreport.pdf

* The official reports (Schlesinger, Taguba, Fay) allude to these accusations but the most succinct example can be found in Danner's book on pg. 19. Here he cites the constant demand for more and better information and the reluctance of military members at Abu to report on the abuse because of repeated praise given by leadership for the results of the most deviant interrogators.

which can be rapidly institutionalized to the point it is no longer condemned or in some cases, even noticed.

Core problem #5 – Developmental Timidity

The final component of the military's ethical woes centers on the institution's timid attitude toward ethical matters and hesitating approach to dealing with moral development and moral concerns. Developmental timidity refers to a general reluctance to engage in moral education and training to the level required to facilitate individual behavioral and institutional culture change. A strong critique of this problem is provided by Willard Goldman who highlights the long tradition the military has of focusing on program style over program substance. "Since Secretary of Defense George C. Marshall initiated Character Guidance programs in all branches of the Service in 1951, the production of booklets and teaching random classes in units has constituted our most consistent approach to character training. Marching soldiers into classrooms for an hour of lecture on dubious agenda by a trainer with unspecified credentials has only achieved the most indecisive results."⁸⁷ He goes on to argue that "The problem is that the military has no unified approach or agreement as to which road it wants to take because it does not have a clue as to where it wants to go."⁸⁸ As a result of this lack of agreement and direction, the military has failed to develop programs robust enough to deal with the challenges of individual behavioral change and institutional culture change. Goldman points out that, "we have no effective mechanism for developing character in those who do not come from a values-rich environment. We repeatedly challenge them to embrace increasing ethnic, racial, gender, religious and individual diversity, but without equipping them with the training and education required to appropriate cognitive development and change."⁸⁹ The fits and starts, which have marked institutional

efforts over the last half-century, are testimony to the trepidation leadership seems to experience when challenged to create a consistent, intentional approach to moral fitness.

This timidity toward moral issues is also evidenced in the approach that the Services take toward moral development when programs are implemented. The hesitation appears in both the substance and the medium utilized by the Services. Programs in military ethics tend to focus on hot-button social issues like sexual harassment, racial discrimination, and fraternization and rarely delve into the challenges of false reporting, toleration, and cheating. The failure to tackle the tough issues in substance is often compounded by the fact that many moral education programs are executed by offices with little background in moral development. As an example, the Department of the Navy recently released their five objectives for 2006 which included “Reinforce ethics as a foundation of conduct within the Department of the Navy.”⁹⁰ This fundamentally moral and primarily developmental goal was not assigned to commanders or chaplains, but instead what given to the General Counsel of the Navy. Given this assignment of duties, it is unlikely there will be any serious individual development beyond a new wave of rehashed of legal compliance lessons. As long as Service leadership fears the topic of morality more than the implications of failing to adequately ensure its development across the force, the Services will continue to suffer through inadequate programs administered by inappropriate staffs.

In the Character Guidance Program manual of 1950, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Omar N. Bradley states “Character guidance is a term developed to define all actions which tend to encourage the growth of moral responsibility, spiritual values, and strong self-discipline in the individual.”⁹¹ This understanding of comprehensive nature of character development stands in stark contrast to contemporary efforts to instill moral responsibility

without addressing the underlying issues that shape that morality. True character development has become very superficial because society is no longer willing to address the moral and spiritual aspects essential to character shaping. The idea that morality can be “bolted on” the exterior instead of built into the individual is a flawed construct that must be discarded. Figure 2 below shows the developmental construct employed across the Services by Chairman Omar Bradley and Secretary of Defense George C. Marshall in 1951.

1950 Military Character Guidance Program⁹²

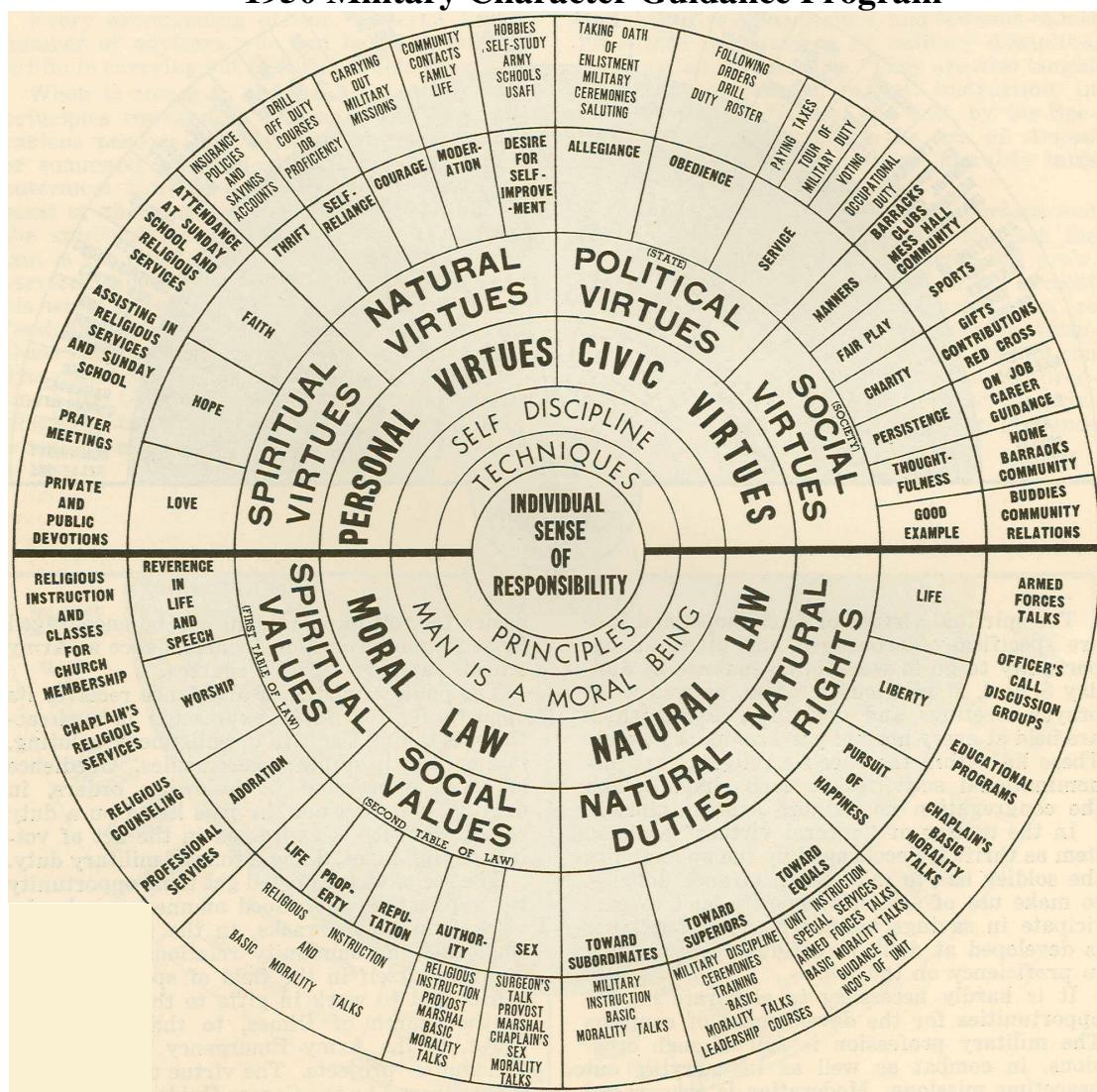


Figure 2

In explaining this construct, the text states, “There is no lack, therefore, of opportunities to develop character...the chart indicates innumerable occasions for the formation of those habits of life which make for strong character and the exercise of a sense of responsibility.”⁹³

The vast majority of the opportunities shown in this graphical depiction of avenues of influence on individual moral responsibility still exist today in spite of the politically correct and multicultural nature of the modern force. However, until the military can overcome its timid approach to the moral realm, it is likely that these myriad opportunities will continue to be missed. As a result, the military’s significant powers of moral shaping and development will continue to be squandered on PowerPoint deep programs that lack serious substance or impact. This developmental timidity is especially serious because it not only fails to rectify the problem of inadequate moral development, but it also serves as an effective barrier to future institutional change efforts. This problem must be acknowledged and addressed as one of the first steps toward institutional improvement in the moral realm.

The cumulative effects of these five component problems are having and will continue to have negative impacts on the moral caliber of the United States military as a profession and on its individual members. The nature of the problem dictates that there will not be a catastrophic moral breach in the profession, but instead a gradual moral hollowing of the force. Worst of all, the impact of these negative influences is continuing almost unabated because of the complete lack of serious ethical development programs in the Services. The meager resistance posed by the core value programs has devolved into bulletin board slogans with the resultant effect akin to rearranged chairs on the Titanic’s deck. The sky may not be falling, but with internal corrosion going unchecked and leadership spouting platitudes that

are disconnected from required resources and existing culture, it will not be long before Henny-Penny has a legitimate cause for alarm.

We have, in fact, two kinds of morality side by side; one which we preach but do not practice, and another which we practice but seldom preach.⁹⁴

Bertrand Russell

CHAPTER NOTES

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⁹² The Chaplain School, ST 16-151 The Army Character Guidance Program, Carlisle Barracks, 1 March 1950, 18.

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Chapter VI

The Rise and Fall of Core Values

Core-values programs are grounded in organizational efficacy rather than the moral good ... leaving military leaders and educators an incomplete toolbox with which to deal with 'real-world' ethical problems.⁹⁵

Schlesinger Report on DoD Detention Operations

The military's increased ethical focus after Vietnam and in the wake of the 1970 Professionalism Study had positive impacts on the overall profession of arms. However, the lack of focus, comprehensiveness and endurance in the initiatives resulted in failure to completely address the core problems and the reemergence of similar moral fault lines in the decades that followed. Moral failures in conduct, accountability, and professionalism ranging from Tailhook to Aberdeen Proving Grounds to Service Academy scandals generated enough concern in senior military leadership to enable substantive change. In each of the Services, this change arrived in the 1990s in the form of core value programs designed to codify and instill the essential values of each organization. Unfortunately, although it has yet to be acknowledged by Service leadership, the core values revolution has been a failed experiment.

The good intentions have not translated into substantive change because instead of implementing a comprehensive strategy to address the overt problems and underlying cultural causes, the Services chose to sacrifice, to take a significantly sub-optimized but more easily implemented solution instead of tackling the harder institutional problems. These parallel decisions across the Services have served only to create a moral façade and a false sense of confidence while the internal corrosion continues. This section examines the core values movement and highlights the inherent faults of this approach to moral development,

the institutional failures during implementation, and shows why the core values concept is not working and will not work in the future.

Core Values Concept

The concept of core values focuses on the codification of those values that form the basic expectations of membership and conduct in an organization. Core values serve to govern personal relationships, guide mission processes, clarify organizational identities, and serve to explain why an organization operates the way it does.⁹⁶ Core values shape behavior in the organization, but at the same time they are the products of organizational consensus on acceptable moral standards.

A great deal has been written since the early 1990s about the individual Service values and the basic concept of having a core values program. However, it should be remembered that, the core values programs were just another step in the profession's attempts to safeguard moral standards. The Services have a long and diverse history of ethical development programs. As an example, the Air Force, as the youngest service, has had five moral development programs including the 1948 Character Guidance Program (represented by the graphic at the end of Chapter III), 1957 Dynamics of Moral Leadership Program and the 1974 Adult Values Education Program prior to the current core values program.⁹⁷ The core values revolution was just a new phase in this evolution of institutional ethical approaches. Each military department "promulgated a set of 'core values,' beginning with the Navy and Marine Corps in 1992, the Air Force in 1995, and the Army in 1998."⁹⁸ Although each Service's program and resulting value sets were unique, the basic products in each were the result of the quality revolution of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Since time

and space will not allow for a comprehensive review of each of these efforts, the focus will be on the key concepts of this approach to moral development.

What's Not Wrong

First, the argument that the Core Values programs have been inadequate does not presuppose that the concept is inappropriate or useless. Core values are a useful tool because they are designed to provide the never-changing definition of “who we are and what we stand for” that is fundamental to organizational identity and sustainment. In essence, core values are designed to succinctly codify the behavioral expectations of members of an organization. Core values serve as a focusing tool in the organization in much the same way that mission statements help maintain unity of effort and purpose for the membership. Core values programs bring a great deal to an organization when properly developed and implemented as a component of a larger ethical development system. The problem for the Services is not the inappropriateness of the tool but in their development and application of it.

Equally as important as the acknowledgement that the Core Values concept is not inherently wrong, is the need to dismiss many of the spurious problems with the concept. In almost every Service, critics have presented flimsy arguments in opposition to the concept. These arguments have only served to dilute and distract from the legitimate critiques of the overall system. Critics of the Air Force and Navy claim they do not have enough values and critics of the Army say they have too many. Secularists decry religious overtones and claim that all of the Services allow too much involvement by the chaplain corps. Meanwhile, religious advocates bemoan the subversion of religious underpinnings and the limited role that the chaplains are allowed to play. Still others write scathing columns about the fact that

there is not a common list of core values for the entire Department of Defense.* Although one must acknowledge the merit of each of these critiques in their context, in the end, they must be discarded because they are effectively chaff; focused more on fine-tuning a concept that was doomed from inception than fixing the larger problem. With these clarifications in mind, it is time to examine why this concept has failed and will continue to fail in its attempt to safeguard the ethical standards of the profession of arms.

Why Core Values Failed

The first major critique of the Service Core Value Programs (CVP) is that they have been grossly over tasked. The CVPs, as the Services only significant non-legal ethical tools, were tasked to be institutional guidelines, admission standards for the profession, decision-making frameworks and cultural pillars. Even before implementation took effect, the expectations had far exceeded the capacity of any well-crafted collection of moral slogans. This portrayal of the CVPs, as the one-stop-shop for institutional ethics, generated a desired end-state which the program is incapable of attaining. As a result, they have been severely limited in their effectiveness. Despite this reality, the absence of other approaches or a larger ethical system resulted in everyone standing behind and singing the praises of a doomed approach. In a speech to the Virginia Military Institute, the former commander of the Air Force's Air Education and Training Command, General Hal Hornburg said "Core values are your bedrock, despite whether it's good times or turbulent times, core values are your guidepost, your touchstone, the means by which you always know what to do because you are guided by that unchangeable, unwavering set of core values. That's why they're important. To help you navigate turbulent times whether on an individual or institutional

* The majority of these arguments are found in the papers submitted to the 1999 Joint Services Conference on Professional Ethics which can be found at <http://www.usafa.af.mil/jscope/jscope99.html>

level.”⁹⁹ An examination of the commencement addresses at the service academies, speeches and official memos during the second half of the 1990s quickly reveals the magnitude of the expectations placed on the CVPs. Unfortunately for the Services, simple statements of ethical principle cannot possibly be expected to transform personal conscience, impute moral wisdom, and instill moral courage. The sensational claims regarding the impact of the core values, which were rampant following adoption, created an immediate credibility gap in the implementation process because warriors saw no substance behind the finely crafted statements to indicate that they were anything beyond bumper stickers of a new regime. The most unfortunate aspect of this process is that core value programs were never designed to be the ethical panacea for the Services. Core value statements are capstone elements designed to serve as the guiding lights for large organizations. The Services failed by trying to make a moral developmental system out of value statements. Instead of focusing on making behavior adhere to moral principles, focus was placed on intellectual assent to value concepts and, as a result, there was no fundamental change in organizational behavior. Failure occurred because the education, training, and reinforcement systems necessary to enable the cultural inculcation of the values are inadequate or nonexistent. In short, the Services failed because they implemented a partial solution without a supporting system and then condemned it to failure by attempting to stretch it to cover a much larger problem.

A second significant issue is that the Service programs floundered during implementation and were grossly undersold. Despite significant hype within the Pentagon at their initial revealing, most Services were still trying to ensure that the majority of the

membership knew what the values were several years after implementation.* This is very surprising considering the massive communication systems available to the Services and the speed at which normal institutional policy is implemented. While the CVPs may have been doomed from the start, the Services would do well to look back at their implementation process in order to avoid repeating the underwhelming marketing efforts next time.

Unfortunately, the lackluster implementation was only exceeded in its undermining effect by the absence of example from senior leadership. In the 1998 Navy Core Values Survey, six years after implementation, “lack of leadership example in modeling the core values” was cited for a second time as one of the main causes of failure in adoption of the core values.¹⁰⁰ The impact of duplicity, of failing to practice what the institution is preaching, has a pervasive and devastating effect on character change efforts. Although the other Services have not taken the time to conduct similar internal assessments, the evaluation of comments in climate and retention surveys during this period indicate that similar results would be found across the board. Without moral exemplars above, or noticeable cultural changes in the surrounding environment, warriors are inclined to see core values as nothing more than the latest salve for our collective conscience in a profession that is driven by bottom-line demands on getting the mission done.

The installation of the core values requires institutional adjustment beyond the announcement of the program. The failure to complete these critical follow-on actions dooms the concept to window-dressing status. The Navy, again the only Service willing to engage in serious follow-on investigation, provides an accurate assessment of the failure of all of the Services programs in its 1998 critique. “In the beginning, the Core Values

* This assessment based upon a review of the 1998 Navy’s Core Values Survey, leadership speeches during this period, and personal experience. The survey found in 1998, six years after the Navy’s adoption of its three core values, that a general knowledge of those values was finally becoming the standard.

Initiative (CVI) called for a three-pronged effort in the domain of Core Values. To date, efforts have apparently been focused solely on the education component, by means of instruction. Virtually nothing has been done in the CVI component areas of reinforcement and accountability.”¹⁰¹ This incomplete implementation, whether a result of institutional neglect or reflection of changing Service priorities, has seriously undermined the overall program. Altogether, the cumulative result of over tasking and underselling by service leadership doomed the core value programs to flounder in ineffectiveness. While this fate was unfortunate, a closer look at the core values concept will show that the inadequacy of this approach to moral development made its fate predetermined.

Why Core Values Fail

Up to now, criticisms of the core values have been focused on the misapplication of the concept by the Services; it is now time to examine why this concept is simply the wrong approach to ethical development in the Services or anywhere else. This examination of core values will provide insight as to what is needed in a more effective approach to ethical development in the military.

Faulty Assumption

The first problem with using a CVP is that it makes the dangerous presupposition of an ethical foundation in the membership. This assumption is simply not valid in the current American society that is dominated by post-modern, relativist thought. CVPs require this basic foundation to build on and will fail in its absence because there is no common understanding of what the component values mean. As the former Commandant of the United States Air Force Academy, Brigadier General Patrick Gamble stated, “You can’t say ‘don’t lie, cheat or steal,’ anymore. You’ve got to redefine for them what lying, cheating and

stealing is all about.”¹⁰² While this may seem a bit pejorative coming from the commandant, all of the academies and ROTC detachments are facing an influx of individuals that view absolute values as passé. It is time for military leadership to acknowledge that the baseline of moral competence is in decline and that old assumptions on acceptance and practice of traditional values by incoming personnel are no longer valid. Ralph Keyes argues that this should not be a surprise because we are living in a “post-truth era.” He comments that this degraded moral environment “... allows us to dissemble without considering ourselves dishonest. When our behavior conflicts with our values, what we’re most likely to do is reconceive our values. Few of us want to think of ourselves as being unethical, let alone admit that to others, so we devise alternative approaches to morality.”¹⁰³ He continues by saying, “We no longer tell lies. Instead we ‘misspeak.’ We ‘exaggerate.’ We exercise ‘poor judgment...The term ‘deceive’ gives way to the more playful ‘spin.’”¹⁰⁴ The realities of conditional morality can be seen in the white lies and rationalized cheating rampant on the front pages of our newspapers. From Enron to Martha Stewart to the United Nations food-for-oil program the infractions have become so common that many stop taking notice. The military is not immune to this creative ethical culture because portions of it infiltrate the profession with each new accession group and the existing membership is continuously impacted through social and cultural means. In the end, the simple truth is that CVPs depend on a preexistent knowledge, the understanding and acceptance of basic values, which is no longer a valid assumption in American society or the American military.

Minimalist Morality

This lack of a basic moral foundation is compounded by the second flaw which is the fact that CVPs tend to foster a minimalist approach to moral behavior. Core values concepts

focus on external appearance instead of internal change. Although differentiating between being good and doing good may seem to be splitting hairs to some, this concept is of fundamental importance when discussing moral behavior. Those focusing on external appearances act in ways to be seen as good, whereas, those who have internalized moral concepts desire to act solely because the good is the right action to take. This later concept is captured in the words of General S.L.A. Marshall when he said that a man has integrity “... when he holds himself to the same line of duty when unobserved as he would follow if his superiors were present.”¹⁰⁵ This internalized morality promotes consistent, dependable behavior as opposed to the superficial morality, which sounds good on the surface but fails Marshall’s test and resembles the outside-of-church behavior of many religious zealots. The minimalist approach fostered by core values programs serves to compound the dangerous perception that ethics is academically important and operationally irrelevant because all the emphasis is on the talk instead of the walk.

Core value programs are more focused on consensus than development and this leads to ethical appearances with no substance; a perfect recipe for moral failure. Peter Bowen expounds on this critical flaw by stating, “Values programs promote value clarification, discuss values applications and consider case studies, but they do not actually develop the corresponding behavior. Values programs can not provide the intellectual framework because they are empty and fail to provide a compelling ‘why’ or motivation for ethical behavior.”¹⁰⁶ He continues his critique by stating that the real problem at the heart of the values concept is that “... values language is treaty language. The program values are acceptable to all sides, to all ethical theories, because each theory is free to understand the value in whatever terms are consistent with their theory. Values are supposed to provide us

with a guide for behavior in complex, difficult ethical situations. But the more we try to make a value acceptable to all, the less we are able to use it as an effective guide in that situation.”¹⁰⁷ The result of this generic approach is that the CVPs quickly transition into fine sounding slogans that lack functionality. As John Woodgate points out in his critique of the Canadian Defense Ethics Program, this lack of operational relevance in the values quickly leads to their dismissal by the majority of warriors.¹⁰⁸ Values programs fail to create any motivation for change on the individual level and, as a result, the only constraint for the individual becomes institutional rules and regulations which form the minimalist of ethical safeguards.

Improper Focus

Another critical flaw of the core values concept lies in its basic method of approaching the challenge of moral development. Core values are designed as an organizational-level approach, instead of addressing development at the individual level. Unfortunately for the proponents of this methodology, organizational morality can only be effectively addressed by impacting the collective performance of individuals within the organization. There are situations in which this broad brush approach to controlling organizational behavior can be effective, but this is only true because other moral development processes are being focused on the individuals. For example, in religious groups and civic organizations, such as the Boy Scouts, the membership receives individual training to further expand on the concepts behind the basic values. Without this supporting developmental system for the membership, core values have little hope of impacting an organization.

A look at the Air Force's core values program provides a perfect example of this fact. One of the stated assumptions of the Air Force's core values initiative says, "Our first task is to fix organizations; individual character development is possible, but it is not our goal."¹⁰⁹ It is difficult to understand how organizational behavior change could be expected without a focus on correcting individual behavior. This assumption is also in direct conflict with the Air Force Core Values Guru's Guide which states "Only human beings can recognize and follow values. Organizations have and follow values only in so far as significant numbers of their members have and follow them."¹¹⁰ The Air Force's absence of individual focus was also shown during the implementation of their program. As Steven Keith argues, "The basic strategy of integrating Air Force institutional core values into individual lives of Air Force members is authoritarian in nature." This draconian approach to improving the ethical environment was compounded by the inability or unwillingness to provide individuals with a foundation for the specific service values. As the Air Force's Little Blue Book on Core Values states, "The core values strategy attempts no explanation of the origin of the values except to say that all of us, regardless of our religious views, must recognize their functional importance and accept them for that reason."¹¹¹ It seems that the very nature of the core values approach to improving institutional morality is problematic. The Air Force provides a glaring case study, but the story is very similar across the Services, where the inability to use the core value programs at the individual level has resulted in ineffective moral improvement.

Tool Not a System

Finally, the core value programs are simply inadequate to deal with many of the challenges faced in an organizational moral change effort. Core values are specific tools, not

an entire ethical system and are, therefore, inadequate to confront some of the daunting barriers to moral development present in a large institution. The momentum to challenge contradictory policies, address lackluster leadership support, and expose the absence of moral role models will never come from the surface level approach of core values. Army Lieutenant Colonel William Bell highlights this problem in his article “The Impact of Policies on Organizational Values and Culture.” He states, “For fundamental change to occur, the values of the organization must be brought in line with its policy or vice versa. If values are changed for the sake of policy then there is a fundamental problem with those values or the ethical framework of the organization.”¹¹² The Navy Core Values Report revealed evidence that “perceptions by many Navy women and men that their Navy and its leadership are less than fully committed to the NCV.”¹¹³ The core values programs have been plagued by the policy conflicts and appearances of weak support, but it has been served the death sentence by the absence of example. Professor Joseph Brennan argues, “The right and the good cannot be taught by precepts mounted with fine words like values, integrity, morality, or even leadership. Instead, the right and the good must be demonstrated every day in the choices that we make, the actions that we take, the example that we set.”¹¹⁴ In his article “Why Aren’t We Buying Core Values,” Matthew Jones, clearly states that we have failed in this task. “Our effort to inculcate core values is failing because as an institution, we have lost the ability to set a proper example; at every level of the chain of command, those below are losing faith in the integrity of those above. Without this trust, loyalty is impossible, setting the example is impossible, and effective ethical training is impossible. We are left with slogans and lesson plans, the dry shells of concepts that should be the lifeblood of our institution.”¹¹⁵ These dry shells are the result of the Services attempting to

address ethical improvement without a systematic approach for generating behavioral change. Core values are a great tool but they were never meant to be used in isolation of a larger moral development system.

While there are a multitude of avenues to effective organizational change, any effort focused on individual behavioral change must focus on motivating and equipping the individual and removing institutional barriers to that change. Core values have failed and continue to fail because they do not focus on the individual and they have been rendered incapable of making the necessary cultural changes. Given this condemning evidence, it is now time to raise the question as to why the world's largest bureaucracy would stake the future of its profession on a flawed concept.

When values have been separated from a foundation of morality, they come to mean nothing because they mean everything.¹¹⁶

John Hawkins, "Principled Leadership in an Age of Cynicism"

CHAPTER NOTES

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<http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Aug2004/d20040824finalreport.pdf> on 3 Jan 06) appendix H 3.

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⁹⁹ Hal M. Hornburg, *Address to Virginia Military Institute Corps of Cadets*, Lexington, VA, 16 Nov 2000 (accessed at <http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/readings/hornburg.htm> in Sept 05).

¹⁰⁰ Herbert G. Baker and Murrey Olmsted, *A Progress Check on the Navy Values Community: Report on the 1998 Navy Core Values Survey*, (Navy Personnel Research and Development Center: San Diego Mar 1999) viii.

¹⁰¹ Baker ix.

¹⁰² Genevieve Anton and Jeff Thomas, *A Question of Honor*, Air Force Times, 7 March 1994, 14.

¹⁰³ Keyes 13.

¹⁰⁴ Keyes 13.

¹⁰⁵ S.L.A. Marshall, *Thoughts on War*, 1941 as cited in United States Air Force Academy Cadet Handbook *Contrails*, Vol. 35, 1989.

¹⁰⁶ Peter S. Bowen, *Beyond Corps Values* accessed at <http://atlas.usafa.af.mil/jscope/JSCOPE99/Bowen99.html> on 1 Sep 05) 6.

¹⁰⁷ Bowen 7.

¹⁰⁸ John Woodgate, An Analysis of the Canadian Defense Ethics Program Decision-Making Guidance (CGSC, Leavenworth: June 2004) 57.

¹⁰⁹ “The Little Blue Book,” United States Air Force Core Values, 1 January 1997 (No page numbers, see Section III, item 8).

¹¹⁰ Air Force Core Values Guru’s Guide, Version 1.0 accessed at <http://usafa.af.mil/core-value/> in 1997. (cited in Dierker)

¹¹¹ “The Little Blue Book” (No page numbers, see section III, item 1).

¹¹² Bell 6.

¹¹³ Baker viii.

¹¹⁴ Joseph Brennan, *Foundations of Moral Obligation: The Stockdale Course* (Novato, California: Presidio Press, 1994) 206.

¹¹⁵ Matthew Jones, *Why Aren’t We Buying Core Values?* (Proceedings: US Naval Institute Annapolis: Jun 1997 Vol. 123 Issue 6 Pg 51) 2.

¹¹⁶ John Hawkins, *Principled Leadership in an Age of Cynicism* (accessed at www.leader-values.com/Content/detail.asp?ContentDetailID=226 on 4 Nov 05).

Chapter VII

Barriers to Moral Reform

The nations morals are like its teeth, the more decayed they are the more it hurts to touch them.¹¹⁷

George Bernard Shaw

Moral development is a daunting task at the individual level and borders on formidable at the organizational level, even in a permissive environment. The inherent challenges of generating consensus on substance, method and desired end-state generate sufficient resistance to stall many efforts. The task initiating and managing moral reform becomes even more difficult when organizational, cultural or situational barriers inhibit the development process and foster a general reluctance to attempt any improvement. This section addresses this challenge from the military perspective and examines the specific barriers that currently impede moral reform.

In trying to assess moral reform in the military, several key questions must be addressed. If moral competence is essential to our nation's combatants and the skills comprising that competence can be instilled through a deliberate process, why is there so much reluctance to take serious steps toward the inculcation of these skills? Why have the demands for improvement from prominent ethicists and leaders been mostly ignored over the last quarter century? Why is it only in the aftermath of events like Tailhook and Abu Ghraib that morality gets any air time, and then only to address the "messy legal issues" instead of the underlying developmental problems? Although motivation to tackle this problem may be lacking, there appears little disagreement that in today's media-scrutinized, public opinion-dependant, and ethically challenging environment that America will be better served by those equipped with the moral reasoning skills and the ability to navigate moral hazards and avoid

costly moral failure. The following discussion shows, however, that this consensus has not translated into serious institutional efforts to create these moral warriors. Further, it argues that through a combination of benign neglect and intentional acquiescence, the Services have undermined their own ethical climates and have subverted the ethical development of their service members. While this negligence is obviously more a product of reluctance and prioritization than malicious intent, the consequences of inaction remain the same.

The overarching question that must be addressed here is “why would America’s military establishment not want fully trained moral warriors?” This question receives top billing because it encompasses the core motivations that answer most of the follow-on questions regarding how, when, and what has happened. In answering this question, it should be remembered that even slight levels of resistance are significant in preventing the enacting of ethical reform in a heavily tasked, low-inertia monolith like the Department of Defense. With this in mind, it is time to consider the seven major factors that are acting in concert to sway military leadership away from, or blind them to, their moral responsibility to adequately train and equip our warfighters in ethical development. These factors can roughly be lumped into two groups consisting of factors resulting from the nature of the profession or organization and factors resulting from the nature of morality itself. Each is examined in an effort to expose their potential impact on institutional decision-makers.

Institutional Barriers

Huntington’s Highest Military Values

The first barrier is the impact of what Samuel Huntington calls the “highest military values.”¹¹⁸ The dynamic duo of loyalty and obedience are presented in his classic, The Soldier and the State, as the true unchanging core values of all the military services. His

assertion is convincing when one looks at the basic expectations of all service members and those behaviors that the Services consistently attempt to reinforce. On initial review, it is difficult to deny the primacy of these values and equally challenging for most to see why such noble values would be perceived as doing any harm to the institution or its membership. What is normally missed in this process is astutely noted in Malham Wakin's analysis when he states, "The structure of an institution that depends critically on the acceptance of obedience as one of its highest values may place a strain on the moral integrity of its members."¹¹⁹ It seems that the dominant role of loyalty and obedience can cause our Duty, Honor, Country motto to suffer from a tyranny of duty that when powered by a strong allegiance to country results in honor being lost in the shuffle or only being applied when conditions are favorable. As Dr. Davida Kellogg points out, this system can create an environment in which "Duty, honor, and integrity are pitted against loyalty in a lose-lose contest."¹²⁰ For those who feel this is an unfair assessment of these values, consider these questions. Does the almost absolute requirement for obedience in the military, foster an environment that is supportive of individual ethical contemplation? If a subordinate engages in this activity and attempts to provide feedback on the morality of a specific order or policy, how is this typically received? If ethical considerations are frequently marginalized in decision-making processes, is it realistic to expect the membership to invest time and energy in development of this skill?

Finally, how often is moral compromise induced when individuals are forced to choose between loyalty to their boss or unit, which embodies the Service to many, and their own standards of integrity? It seems that the very nature of military service fosters the enrichment of obedience and loyalty, which in some ways runs counter to the creation of a

morally supportive environment. The reality of this concern led the authors of the current Code of Ethics for Government Service in the Joint Ethics Regulation (JER) to add this statement as one of its key tenants. “Put loyalty to the highest moral principles and to country above loyalty to persons, party, or Government department.”¹²¹ Leadership must heed this warning and realize that despite the vast benefits the military profession reaps from these two traits, the preeminence of obedience and loyalty in the military profession, without a balancing force of moral consideration, can create a tyranny of influence that effectively serves as the first barrier to moral progress.

Centralized Moral Consideration

A second institutional factor that inhibits moral development across the force is the culture of centralized moral consideration that exists in the military. This culture fosters the perception that moral consideration is primarily the responsibility of senior leadership and that the rest of the force is responsible only for the execution. This mindset is fostered by the fact that the military membership is forced by nature of their constitutional obligation to readily submit their lives under the assumption that the cause they are advancing has been determined to be just and morally legitimate. At the unit level, this culture, serves as an unfortunate moral suppressant, since the membership usually has very limited, if any, say in when, where, and how they are employed. This process then reinforces a culture in which an attitude of abject consent is both expected and required. This inability to control one’s employment fosters the “ours is not to reason why, ours is but to do or die” mentality.¹²²

Fortunately, many do not readily relinquish their responsibilities for moral consideration. However, for those who choose this path, Donald Koenig points out that, “The American professional military society has not developed an acceptable mechanism for

an officer to voice opposition on moral grounds.”¹²³ In fact, our system is designed in such a way that dissent on the basis of principle often requires either open disobedience, likely resulting in punishment or professional suicide, or separation from service. So we are forced to echo the question of Emily Eakin who writes, “What happens when military orders and the demands of conscience come into conflict?”¹²⁴ To put it another way, “For the officer this comes down to a choice between his own conscience, on the one hand, and the good of the state, plus the professional virtue of obedience, upon the other. As a soldier, he owes obedience; as a man, he owes disobedience.”¹²⁵ Samuel Huntington appears to bring this conflict to resolution by pointing out that conscience will rule in only a few instances, because “rarely will the military man be justified in following the dictates of private conscience against the dual demand of military obedience and state welfare.”¹²⁶ To Huntington’s aforementioned dual demands, one must add self-interest, in the form of one’s career, as a third significant factor in favoring moral acquiescence. This career-preservation factor led John Heelan from Stanford to observe that, “military commanders, loath to resign their commissions, will obey orders from their political masters--especially where the Commander-in-Chief and the President are the same person--even though privately they might think those orders unwise.”

This internal conflict of responsibilities fosters resistance to the creation of a new generation of officers who are more inclined to critically assess the morality and justice of policies and decisions of their superiors or civilian masters. After all, why would we want to foster the development of individual and collective conscience in an organization that effectively has no outlet for their assessment? As Herman Melville illustrated clearly in Billy Budd, even if the leaders are clearly in the moral wrong, efforts to correct that injustice that

step outside the bounds of the aforementioned loyalty and obedience are likely to be met swiftly and severely. Although, “the first moral obligation of any officer is to ensure that his conduct and that of his superiors is basically consonant with the values of the society and the constitution he has sworn to uphold” our hierarchical military structure does not encourage or enable completion of this task.¹²⁷ In the end, the creation of moral warriors appears inhibited by a system that provides no appropriate venue for moral dissent and a culture that fosters abdicating primary moral considerations solely to individual leaders or civilians outside of the organization.

Machiavellian* Mindsets

The third factor inhibiting the development of a moral force is the impact of the prevailing military mindset. Although it is impossible to categorize a single mindset as representative of the entire force, realist and Machiavellian attitudes are very prevalent in the dialogue of the military community. This outlook views the world in terms of power struggles and typically sees moral concern as a nicety that cannot be afforded in times of war and a consideration that tends to serve as unwelcome handcuffs on operational freedom at home and abroad. The “mission at all costs” mentality acknowledges America’s desire to fight nobly, but places primacy on the fact that noble or not, America expects its forces to win and win decisively. This mentality has developed, in the words of Colonel Kenneth Wenker, “an institutional practice—an erroneous institutional practice—of looking at ‘military necessity’ as a nonmoral, but practical, demand. This is a terrible mistake.”¹²⁸ By

* Machiavellianism is defined as “The political doctrine of Machiavelli, which denies the relevance of morality in political affairs and holds that craft and deceit are justified in pursuing and maintaining political power.” In layman’s terms, it equates to amoral realism.

fostering the perception that military necessity is somehow amoral, we (1) create an attitude that ethics is unimportant, and (2) we become unaware of real ethical problems; the biggest problem in the military is not bad ethical judgments it is ethical omission. “All too often we make no ethical judgment at all—at least not consciously.”¹²⁹ This “tendency to present problems as being conflicts between the practical and the moral” ignores the fact that, in reality, the conflict is actually between different moral value systems; one that emphasizes principles and, therefore, ways and means and one that by-passes these and elevates outcomes. “By misrepresenting the conflict, we teach that morality is not all that important...it becomes a ‘nice to have.’”¹³⁰ The predominance of this mindset creates an environment in which moral guardians can quickly become marginalized and moral restraint is considered only in the context of legality and public opinion.

The treatment of courage in the military is a perfect case study of how this mindset impacts moral development. Those military members exhibiting physical courage are rightly called heroes and receive rewards and adoration. Those members exhibiting moral courage often receive titles like “non team players” and “whistleblowers” and are more often admonished for their effort than held up for their demonstration of moral fortitude. Unfortunately, the Services seem blind to this contradiction and continue to call for this virtuous behavior without enabling it. The Air Force Chief of Staff recently told his service, “The true foundation of character is, not merely knowing the right thing to do, but also having a firm conviction and the courage to act upon such knowledge. This conviction requires solid moral fiber and ethical strength.”¹³¹ Unfortunately, until aggressive action is taken to alter the skeptical view of morality’s value and start rewarding moral behavior, the

prevailing military mindset will continue to counter any efforts to develop a morally competent force.

Myopic Tendencies

The fourth institutional influence preventing true ethical development is the military's propensity for short-term, non-comprehensive solutions. Fueled by transitory commanders, short budget cycles, and an institutional penchant for immediate results, the Services repeatedly demonstrate that they have neither the long term view nor the requisite patience to implement serious solutions to institutional problems. The revolving door of senior leadership fosters an environment of near-term margin-tweaking instead of comprehensive overhaul. The Service core values programs are unfortunate by-products of this Band-aid approach. While disconcerting, this is not a surprising occurrence and it does not, by itself, create the barrier to moral progress. The greater problem occurs when the senior leadership believes that these quick-fixes are really adequate solutions. This near-sighted philosophy results in the creation of limited-use programs with caveats such as, "altering people's values or souls isn't the aim of an organizational ethics program—managing values and conflict among them is."¹³² In doing this, the moral development system becomes an indoctrination and conflict management tool instead of a process for improving individual knowledge and skills. Also, by tagging the core value programs as the solution to organizational ethical flaws, leadership seems to have considered the case closed and new concerns over value issues are met with the "we have a program" response. These myopic tendencies have infected the Services with a serious case of moral near-sightedness. Every new ethical fiasco is met with a new video and an admonition to improve without regard to underlying systemic causes or potential long-term solutions. It is time to remember the key warning from the

1970 Professionalism Study which stated, “It follows that corrective action must be based on comprehensive programs. Piecemeal actions will not suffice.”¹³³

Lack of Awareness

The final institutional factor serving as a roadblock to ethical improvement is the lack of awareness on the part of the leadership. This barrier to moral development can be further divided into its three subcomponents: (1) Inadequate/non-existent ethical fitness assessment capability; (2) Unreliable internal ethical feedback mechanisms; and (3) Individual numbness in senior leadership resulting from prolonged exposure to an ethically corrosive environment.

In response to the lack of awareness accusation, a critic might well argue “maybe they aren’t aware of the problem because it isn’t nearly as bad as you are portraying it.” While a logical response, it can be shown that, regardless of the severity of the service’s ethical condition, senior leadership is inadequately positioned to be aware of ethical concerns within the organization. Currently, senior leaders in each of the Services have no reliable methods currently in place to monitor or assess the ethical health of the force. The existence of professional legal experts on each Service’s key staff is helpful, but only the most naïve would confuse the actions of legal experts ensuring compliance with the law and the deliberate development of moral competence within the membership. In contrast to the more proactive legal approach, leadership involvement in ethical issues is almost completely reactive. It appears that leaders typically assess their Service’s ethical health in the same way they assess the safety environment, by the number and types of incidents. However, for ethics, unlike safety in the military, there are no Service-level and base-level staffs, no comprehensive monitoring system and no overall institutional office of responsibility. The absence of this structure makes it almost impossible for senior leaders to conduct any

effective monitoring of organizational moral health. Considering that no serious comprehensive ethical reviews have been conducted by any of the Services in three and a half decades, it would be interesting if the Professional Study of 1970 was repeated today.

Would the results be as damning as they were then? The lack of this kind or similar assessment efforts results in leadership that is unaware of the need for ethical improvement because they are out of touch with the ethical health of the force.

Another reason for this lack of leadership awareness is absence of effective feedback mechanisms in the single-track communication system in the military. The chain of command is a phenomenal command and control tool for the organization but it oftentimes works properly only in one direction--down. Bad news, especially in the form of ethical concerns, usually has great difficulty gaining traction traveling up the communication chain. As already discussed, there are not many other effective venues for voicing moral concern in the military. Short of filing official complaints through the inspector general system, there is little hope that updates on the Service's ethical pulse will reach the leadership's ears. This institutional weakness in providing much needed moral feedback to the leadership only serves to compound the aforementioned absence of moral assessment tools.

The final contributor to this institutional obliviousness is that the senior leaders are 20 and 30-year products of the very system in need of correction. Working in an organization that shuns gross ethical violation but condones continual minor compromise has a corrosive effect on each individual's moral compass. After years of being subject to ethical erosion or by personally accepting justification for moral deviation, it is easy to understand how the leadership becomes numb to or simply unaware of issues that an objective observer would see as ethical compromise. In discussing this phenomenon, Wakin points out that "the

ethical concern and perhaps in some cases the ethical sense of young officers exceeds that of their superiors.”¹³⁴ This may seem promising but the result of this inversion of moral sensitivity is an institution that has its ethical conscience at a level of the organization that is unable to make the necessary corrections and the power for environmental change in the hands of those unaware of the problems. This absence of awareness and sensitivity to institutional moral health has enabled the slow development of an environment of normalizing, and justifying, moral deviancy.

Barriers from Morality

It's Too Hard

Now that all of the institutional factors have been examined, it is time to look at the aspects of moral development that generate reluctance in military leadership. Probably the number one reason why ethical development has not been adequately addressed in the military profession, and many other organizations, is because it is simply too hard. Leaders survey the difficult moral terrain and are content to hang their hats on core values programs and proclaim “close enough.” John McDermott, in his lecture at the United States Air Force Academy in March of 1998, put it aptly when he said “if you peel away the self-righteous rhetoric on behalf of getting things straight on the moral business, once and for all, you look directly into the underlying ‘attitude,’ one of cynicism about the possibility of moral sensibility, moral growth, and above all, moral transformation.”¹³⁵ Many talk about moral improvement but most honestly think it is impossible or at least not worth the effort. There are, in fact, two key factors that make everyone want to wring their hands over this issue. First, it seems impossible to gain a consensus opinion on the nature of proper ethical instruction. Even if the motivation to tackle the problem existed, advocates are quickly

stymied by the competing demands of the various schools of ethical thought. Secondly, in today's politically correct environment, religiously contentious issues are areas in which few are willing to venture. Although the core of American values emanates from the Judeo-Christian belief system, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to use those same foundations to provide education and training for the force without immediate condemnation from anti-religious reactionaries. It is an unfortunate irony that, in many ways, the very nature of morality effectively forms a barrier to its inclusion in professional development.

It's Personal

The final barrier to serious ethical development in the military profession is the personal nature of morality. Our moral actions and decisions define who we are and are dictated by what we believe. Consequently, most individuals do not enjoy having their morality questioned and many vigorously defend their choices when challenged. This ethical ego, as it could be called, serves as a barrier to moral improvement because it takes offense at challenges to its competence. This defensive response can be observed by simply recommending ethical training to any group of field grade officers. Personal experience has shown that this suggestion will be quickly dismissed as unnecessary. Yet, if you challenge this same group to share their ethical system or work through a moral dilemma, the lack of development becomes obvious. This condition of cognitive dissonance, in which there is inconsistency between one's beliefs and one's actions, typically results in the modification of beliefs, a rather easy task, instead of the modification of actions. In other words, we do not like thinking of ourselves as being ethically inept although our actions might indicate this. So, instead, we choose to tell ourselves that we are competent and simply 'expand' our definition of ethical in order to resolve the conflict. Cognitive dissonance plays a key role in

our ethical disillusionment because it explains why we have chosen self-deception. When faced with the individual dilemmas of admitting moral ineptitude and requiring training (or even worse behavioral change) or simply redefining our definition of being ethical, many have chosen redefinition instead of acknowledging their ethical incompetence. Although this may sound like too much psycho-babble, it appears ethical denial is a reality in much of the force. This adjustment has been created to make the hypocrisy between principles and practice more tolerable and it is a significant barrier to ethical awareness and development. Ethical denial is possibly the biggest internal danger in today's military – our warriors have convinced themselves of their own goodness based on their own personal standards and their personal measurement and fail to see how vulnerable they are to complete ethical failure.

This review has shown that numerous and significant barriers exist in opposition to a serious effort toward ethical development in the military. Many of these barriers emanate from the prevailing characteristics of the American military institution. From the predominance of Huntington's "loyalty and obedience" to prevailing Machiavellian mindsets and myopic tendencies or the centralization of moral consideration and the organization's lack of moral awareness, there is considerable resistance to a culture change that would promote serious moral improvement in the Services. These institutional barriers are also reinforced by the very nature of the desired change. The complicated and personal dimensions of moral improvement generate frustration and anxiety that further restricts the creation of change. Given these conditions, it is certainly not a conspiracy theory to think that senior leadership has intentionally avoided tackling this institutional malaise because of these obstacles. Fortunately, the discussion does not conclude with a resignation to the status

quo because of these impediments. The next chapter discusses why actions must be taken to renew ethical development efforts in the military in spite of these daunting challenges.

Things alter for the worse spontaneously, if they be not altered for the better designedly.

Francis Bacon

CHAPTER NOTES

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http://www.defenselink.mil/dodgc/defense_ethics/ethics_regulation/jer1-4.doc on 3 Jan 06) 153.

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¹²⁴ Emily Eakin, "Ethical War? Do the Good Guys Finish First?" New York Times-late edition, Eastcoast, New York: Mar 8, 2003, B9.

¹²⁵ Lowell Nelson, *A Value-Based Hierarchy of Objectives for Military Decision-Making* (AFIT: DTIC, Sept 91) 39.

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¹²⁷ Richard A. Gabriel, *Legitimate Avenues of Military Protest*, Military Ethics (Washington, DC: NDU Press, 1987) 110.

¹²⁸ Kenneth H. Wenker, *Military Necessity and Morality*, Military Ethics (Washington, DC: NDU Press, 1987) 179.

¹²⁹ Wenker 181.

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¹³¹ John P. Jumper, *Chief's Sight Picture "Character – The Courage to Do the Right Thing"* 11 Feb 04, (accessed at www.af.mil/media/viewpoints/character.html on 12 Oct 05).

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¹³⁴ Sorely 153.

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Chapter VIII

Moral Warriors – Key to America’s Future

We must not forget that grand ethical arguments come down to a PFC with a rifle, who will have to decide whether or not to take someone’s life.¹³⁶

Terrence Walsh, “Transforming Ethics Instruction at Fort Knox”

The discussion up to this point has covered a great deal of ethical terrain. The myth that morality and military service are opposing forces has been dispelled through recognition that they are, in fact, complementary forces designed to enable the regulation of individual and collective violence. It has also been shown that the American warrior, like his partner professionals, requires specific moral training and education to merit the label of professional competence. The general nature and breadth of the ethical woes in the military services have been presented and have exposed the thin veneer of the existing core values programs. These findings were capped by an investigation of why the Services have failed to address the moral inadequacies, which revealed diverse and significant obstacles to the initiation of a moral improvement effort. The challenge now is to show why, despite these daunting obstacles, action must be taken to eliminate the culture of duplicity and begin intentional moral development of America’s joint warfighters.

Preservation of the Profession

There are five critical reasons why military leadership from all Services should attack the challenge of inculcating moral conduct into our warrior ethos—the first of these is the preservation of the profession of arms. Service in the American military is considered a profession because of the unique operating environment, specialized skill requirements and the unique nature of the service that its members provide to society. As with legal and

medical professionals, the specialized part of military knowledge is not just how to employ their skills, but knowing when to employ them and to what extent. These powers of judgment and moderation come from developments in character while the specific capabilities come from technical training. Dr. Toner points out the danger of having the skills without the moral enablers. “Competence without character is an invitation only to masterful despotism.”¹³⁷ “If the military endows soldiers with power but fails to inculcate a corresponding sense of responsibility, it may—however unintentionally—create despots with ‘military minds’”¹³⁸ This unique moral requirement for our profession is highlighted by Jacques Barzun in his article “The Professions Under Siege,” in which he discusses some of today’s flagging professions. “The message for the professions today is that their one hope of survival with anything like their present freedoms is the recovery of mental and moral force. No profession can live and flourish on just one of the two.”¹³⁹ The removal of moral competence in a profession can quickly undermine the trust essential to the sustainment of public confidence. Evidence of corruption in the legal profession quickly generates anger and incidents of moral laxity within the medical profession lead to financial hardship and fear, but these professional woes are minor in comparison to the concern that could be generated, domestically and internationally, from a hegemonic military force that becomes morally bankrupt. The military membership must seek to safeguard the profession from the constant assault of forces that would threaten competence levels or endanger the public trust. If bureaucratic pressures are allowed to erode the profession’s elevated performance standards, then credibility and distinctiveness are lost, professions decay into simple jobs, and obligations to moral and technical competence become excess requirements. In this keeping with this demise of professionalism concept, it was recently commented, “... the

greatest struggle for the U.S. military in the twentieth century was not the Cold War but a struggle between professionalism and bureaucracy—and bureaucracy won.”¹⁴⁰ While the validity of this statement remains in question for now, it may prove accurate if nothing is done to protect the core of what makes the military a unique profession. If there is a desire to maintain the noble aspects of military service and continue the legacy of honor and integrity, action must be taken to safeguard the profession by addressing its moral inadequacies.

Public Trust

The second source of motivation for the Services to take action is the obligation to the American people and our national values. As discussed earlier, the special trust and confidence placed in our warriors by the American people is unique and comprehensive in nature. Despite the difficulties in the global war on terror, recent studies have shown that the bond of trust between the American military and the public is still very strong. However, the military must not rest on the laurels of its past reputation or ignore the very delicate nature of this relationship. Years of confidence can be quickly squandered by a relatively small number of incidents that violate the public trust. It is time to realize that this bond is endangered by neglecting the upkeep of our moral competencies.

Secretary of the Army, Francis J. Harvey, pointed out in his Commitment to Federal Ethics Standards Memo, “When we stray from our focus for personal gain, for expediency, or for any reason, we betray the trust of our countrymen and we betray ourselves.”¹⁴¹ This betrayal can have catastrophic and long lasting effects. Those who would doubt this relationship need only look to the impact of the Abu Ghraib fiasco on the views of the American public toward the military. Between May 2004 and May 2005, “... those having a great deal of confidence in the leadership of the military has fallen a staggering 15% since

last year (62% to 47%). This is the largest one year decline in attitudes to an institution since The Harris Poll began measuring this.”¹⁴² While this drop cannot be solely attributed to Abu Ghraib, the Harris results cited it as the likely dominant culprit. This massive shift directly impacts operations because “an unfavorable public opinion environment ultimately constrains the range of politically acceptable policies for successfully concluding a military operation.”¹⁴³ America has, as Baird points out in From Nuremberg to My Lai, “...a self-image of moral rectitude. The belief in the essential humaneness and good will of Americans, even in time of war, is ingrained in our national mythology.”¹⁴⁴ This self-image is part of our national heritage and culture and it is our responsibility to ensure our actions remain consonant with that legacy. This consistency is imperative because each military member serves as a global representative who embodies the essence of our nation to the rest of the world. As Stromberg puts it, “Since Americans fight to protect basic human values, they should strive not to disregard those values in fighting to protect them.”¹⁴⁵

If this rationale appears insufficient, a more compelling representation might be the obligations to the American people as codified in the military officer’s oath of office. This oath connects the membership to the Constitution and demands that each officer “well and faithfully discharge” their duties. It is doubtful that the faithful discharge of duties can be accomplished by those warriors who are not ethically competent and morally aware. Sorley points out that this has been proven in our history. He argues “... strict adherence to professional, ethical, and moral codes has been essential if the power and influence of the military organization is to be an effective servant, rather than the arbitrary master of the state.”¹⁴⁶ For commanders, this expectation is even more profound and it was perfectly articulated in the recent Secretary of Defense 2003 Summer Study. “At whatever level of

command we are talking about, the expectation is that an officer has, knows how to use, and will act as the unit’s moral compass.”¹⁴⁷ From the lowest ranking enlisted member to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, a requirement for proper moral conduct has been levied by the American people and abdication of this responsibility comes at our own peril.

Institutional Mandate

A third reason for our military leadership to step up to the plate on ethical matters is that moral development is an institutional responsibility. According to the appropriate sections of the United States Code, each military service is tasked to “Organize, train, and equip forces” to perform specific missions and provide specific protections for the nation.¹⁴⁸ However, somewhere along the way, the part of the train and equip tasking that enables and ensures moral aptitude has been forgotten. It is time to be reminded that “soldiers die, battles are lost, and nations fall just as surely from moral incompetence as from technical incompetence.”¹⁴⁹ Additionally, as Lang points out, “we need to recognize that international law can only take us so far in evaluating what can and cannot be done in the use of military force. There exist important gaps in the law that need to be filled by greater attention to moral principles ...”¹⁵⁰ Intentional moral development provides the skills and expertise to fill these gaps and navigate the endless gray areas, both in combat and at home station.

For those that feel that the charter tasking for each service does not include the responsibility for moral development, it only takes a quick look to a few other official sources to dispel this idea. US Army Statutory Requirement of Exemplary Conduct 10 USCS 3583 (2004) Para. 3583 states, “All commanding officers and others in authority in the Army are required—(1) to show in themselves a good example of virtue, honor, patriotism, and subordination; ... (3) to guard against and suppress all dissolute and immoral practices

...”¹⁵¹ Similar statutory requirements exist for all of the Services. In addition, the Joint Ethics Regulation directs each service member to “Put loyalty to the highest moral principles and to country above loyalty to persons, party, or Government department.”¹⁵² It is obvious that we are only able to satisfy the requirements to provide the example, prevent immoral practices, and properly place our loyalty if we are sufficiently trained in moral principle. Given the nature and scope of the operating environment, it is also clear that this training must be “...to such a degree that he/she [soldier] is also capable of taking a morally responsible decision when under pressure.”¹⁵³ In the end, it is very apparent that the moral development of America’s military forces is not an optional nicety that the Services can choose to dabble in from time to time. This development is an institutional obligation levied by the nature of service being provided and it is a requirement that must be satisfied.

Moral High Ground

The fourth reason for the Services to engage in cleaning their ethical closets is the attainment and sustainment of the moral high ground, which is one of the most critical keys to success in information age warfare. The very nature of modern warfare, with its 24/7, frontline media coverage and the ever-present complex web of war crime accusations, places new and challenging demands on the behavior of nations and individual combatants. As Tyson points out, our combatants today “face a moral landscape that is in many ways more complex than past years.”¹⁵⁴ When you consider this environmental change in relation to an already daunting task, it becomes apparent that the maxim “hope is not a strategy” is all too applicable in the realm of moral development.

Even as far back as 1933, then Army Chief of Staff, General Douglas MacArthur noted “No man, whatever his calling, can have greater need for the ultimate in professional

knowledge and skill than he to whom falls, for example, the responsibility of leading a single infantry battalion in battle.”¹⁵⁵ This assessment still rings true today, only the task has become more daunting due to the spectrum of operations and the emerging influences of information warfare. In the seven decades since General Douglas MacArthur’s observation, much has changed in the technological realms of warfare, but the most significant change relating to the moral high ground is the emergence of what has been termed “the strategic private”¹⁵⁶ or “strategic corporal.”¹⁵⁷ Global information and improved technologies have created a situation in which the perceptions, and even fates, of entire nations can hinge upon the actions of single soldiers or small groups of warriors at the lowest levels of the military organization.

This phenomenon of the strategic private must also be considered in relation to the United States’ position in the world. “The United States has emerged, since at least the fall of the Berlin Wall, as the world’s unquestioned military hegemon. Such power gives America the potential to do both enormous harm and immense good.” A result of this situation, pointed out by the members of the Carnegie Council, is that “America’s moral legitimacy rests, to a large degree, on how the country navigates these moral hazards.”¹⁵⁸ This dominant global leadership role only serves to compound the importance of morally sound action by America’s service members. In the efforts to attain and maintain the moral high ground, Richard Gabriel points out that the only safeguard is the employment of ethically competent warriors. He states, “Only ethics can place the destruction of warfare in perspective and prohibit men from using violence beyond reason.”¹⁵⁹ Moral development must be instilled as a firewall because “Deficiencies in education on moral values leave us open to networks of rationalizations on conscience.”¹⁶⁰ These rationalizations can be

disastrous in media-dominated warfare. As Marshall Cohen states in War and Moral Responsibility, “Once the door is opened to calculations of utility and national interest, the usual speculations about the future of freedom, peace, and economic prosperity can be brought to bear to ease the consciences of those responsible for a certain number of charred babies.”¹⁶¹ Furthermore, as Gabriel warns, “without ethics, the soldier can easily slip into the moral morass of Eichmannism—the value-free technician who applies his skills in a moral vacuum simply because they are ordered by the state. He can also lose sight of his special obligations and come to regard his personal goals and needs as the sole determinant of right and wrong.”¹⁶² This short-sighted focus can have disastrous implications for the entire force and the nation’s objectives. While America’s politicians and policy makers obviously play a key role in the attainment of moral high ground, the increasingly visible role of each military member plays dictates that every possible action must be taken to ensure our part is done to help achieve it and avoid losing it.

Mark Danner, in his analysis of Abu Ghraib, points to this deficiency by stating that “lip-service” protocols issued by leadership could not combat the pervasive culture of disrespect and inhumane treatment generated by the combat situation and personal dislike for the people.”¹⁶³ Although deemed an anomaly or just an exception of bad people doing bad things by many in military leadership, no amount of dismissal on our part can diminish the challenge posed by those around the world who argue “if the pictures of Abu Ghraib do not represent America then what does?”¹⁶⁴ The contradiction that America faces when its warriors fail to demonstrate those moral principles the nation proclaims to the world was accurately portrayed recently in the sarcasm of comedian Rob Cordry. He stated “There’s no question what took place in that prison was horrible. But the Arab world has to realize

that the US shouldn't be judged on the actions of a...well, we shouldn't be judged on actions. It's our principles that matter, our inspiring, abstract notions. Remember: Just because torturing prisoners is something we did, doesn't mean it's something we *would* do.¹⁶⁵ The conflict in Iraq has forced many in the military to take a fresh look at the moral high ground because information age warfare has made it more valuable than any fixed piece of terrain. As Ellen Key points out, "Formerly, a nation that broke the peace did not trouble to try and prove to the world that it was done solely from higher motives ... Now war has a bad conscience. Now every nation assures us that it is bleeding for a human cause, the fate of which hangs in the balance of its victory ... No nation dares to admit the guilt of blood before the world."¹⁶⁶ This environment, combined with America's leading role in the world, creates a situation in which America becomes, for many, the moral exemplar nation. As a result, a British Broadcasting Corporation article points out that "...when a country as dominant as the US openly defies the law, it invites others to do the same" and as a result "The US government is less and less able to push for justice abroad because it is unwilling to see justice done at home."¹⁶⁷

The importance of securing the moral high ground goes beyond the simple possession of intellectual territory. It has been argued that this position, much like physical high ground, increases combat effectiveness and the probability of success. The confidence that this position grants to the warriors and the impact it has on the enemy led former admiral and prisoner of war, James Stockdale to label it the most important weapon in breaking people's wills. He stated "This may surprise you, but I am convinced that holding the moral high ground is more important than firepower."¹⁶⁸ While this may seem a dubious claim to the tactical commander, its validity on the strategic level is well worth consideration.

These factors should make it apparent that the United States has an overwhelming need for morally competent warriors if it intends to be the force for good that was espoused in the State of the Union Address. Ethically competent warriors are essential executors of ethical policies to control the moral high ground because “...once you lose the moral high ground, it is very hard to claim it back.”¹⁶⁹

Our Warrior’s Health

The final reason our military services must devote attention to the ethical realm is that the current and future health of our warriors depends on it. The development of moral competence is not only the accumulation of specific ethical skills but also personal confidence and endurance that are essential elements of mental fitness. As David Halberstam points out in his landmark work The Best and The Brightest, the person who has a firm working knowledge of their internal moral compass “...has a great advantage in times of strain, since his instincts on what to do are clear and immediate. Lacking such a framework of moral conviction or sense of what is right and what is wrong, he is forced to lean almost entirely upon mental processes: he adds up the pluses and minuses of any question and comes up with a conclusion....”¹⁷⁰ To avoid this random, and often immoral calculus, people “need a supportive environment to be the best they can be, not one that undermines their integrity and routinely penalizes honesty and straightforwardness.”¹⁷¹

In addition to this, there are also significant psychological considerations that must be examined. “Morally conscientious military personnel need to understand and frame their actions in moral terms so as to maintain moral integrity in the midst of the actions and stress of combat.”¹⁷² McKenzie presents a similar stern warning in his article “Deputies of Zeus, in which he states, “One must be able to fight without becoming a moral casualty—one whose

heart has become so hardened that the profession has become meaningless, or one who simply has been overcome by the violence and overwhelming nature and variety of evil.”¹⁷³ Ineptitude in this area can have immediate and lasting detrimental effects. As Terrence Walsh also points out, “Soldiers who cannot morally justify what they are asked to do will either hesitate on the battlefield or suffer ill effects later.”¹⁷⁴

Recent discussions and studies on post-traumatic stress disorder (PSTD) indicate that its severity can be lessened by adequately preparing our warriors for the rigors of combat and that includes providing them the ethical toolkit to deal with the situations they will encounter. Dr. Jonathon Shay from the Department of Veterans Affairs argues that there are specific keys to preventing psychological and moral injury in military service are in the hands of military line leaders. One of these keys is having “competent, ethical and properly supported leadership.”¹⁷⁵ Dr. Shannon French points out that “a warrior code and good ethics serve to protect military members, so that they can continue to function in society after the trauma of modern combat.”¹⁷⁶ Finally, in To Serve with Honor, Gabriel advocates that “Without a strong ethical compass, the soldier not only can become a destroyer of humanity, but, under the stress of battle, he may also collapse psychologically, for he can lose sight of the reason why he is practicing his profession.”¹⁷⁷ These potential damages to individual warriors and the consequent loss of combat power make it incumbent upon leadership to ensure warriors are not only physically and technically ready, but also, morally prepared for their duties.

It should now be readily apparent, that although the forces opposing ethical improvement in the profession of arms are daunting, the justification supporting this effort is more than sufficient to counter those forces and, therefore, places responsibility for action directly on the military leadership. As argued, this action is essential to the future

preservation of the profession of arms, it is an obligation to the American people and our national values, it is an institutional responsibility levied on the Services by the government, it enables the attainment and sustainment of the moral high ground, which is critical to success in information age warfare, and it is essential to the current and future health of our warriors. Having broken the roadblocks to intervention, it is now time to begin detailing how the Services should attack the dual problems of institutional moral duplicity* and the lack of individual development.

* There are two concepts for the term duplicity. This accusation of duplicity refers to the “state or quality of being two-fold or double” instead of the concept of deliberate deceptiveness. The accusation focuses on the need to address the dichotomy between institutional practice and precept.

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¹⁶⁹ Richard Wolffe, Newsweek, 5 May 04 (accessed at www.msnbc.msn.com/id/4907803/ on 5 Oct 05).

¹⁷⁰ David Halberstam, *The Best and The Brightest* (New York: Random House, 1972) 88.

¹⁷¹ Sorley 154.

¹⁷² Cook 21.

¹⁷³ K.F. McKenzie, Jr., "Deputies of Zeus", Proceedings July 1991, 61-62.

¹⁷⁴ Walsh 5. (References Mar-Apr 2002 Military Review article by Peter Kilner)

¹⁷⁵ Jonathan Shay, *Preventing Psychological and Moral Injury in Military Service*

www.belisarius.com/modern_business_strategy/shay/shay_prevent_psy_injury.htm (accessed on 31 Oct 05) 2.

¹⁷⁶ Shannon French, *The Code of the Warrior* (accessed at <http://www.pacem.no/2003/1/french.doc> on 19 Sep 2003) 2. (cited in Woodgate)

¹⁷⁷ Gabriel, *To Serve with Honor*, 24.

Chapter IX

The Way Ahead – Military Ethical Transformation

The first step toward change is awareness. The second step is acceptance.¹⁷⁸

Nathaniel Braden

Sometimes a breakdown can be the beginning of a kind of breakthrough, a way of living in advance through a trauma that prepares you for a future of radical transformation.¹⁷⁹

Cherrie Moraga

The moral malaise that currently infects the American military profession is a product of two separate but collaborative factors: inadequate individual moral development and a growing institutional culture of moral duplicity. This situation demands both a comprehensive approach that will address the component problems collectively and individual strategies to address the enduring nature of each issue. To this end, this section presents a comprehensive ethical campaign plan consisting of two component strategies that should be adopted and implemented by Service leadership as a joint method of attacking these challenges.

This ethical campaign plan is designed for joint implementation and would be a useful addition to the Cultural reform component of the current Department of Defense Transformation Plan.¹⁸⁰ Although this component is currently focused only on the creation of an organizational culture of creativity and adaptation, it could easily be expanded to include all of all of the efforts outlined in this campaign plan. Once provided a platform in the transformation plan, the dual strategies of institutional transformation and intentional individual development should be adopted and focused on each of the Services and their membership. Transformation is the appropriate term for the institutional component of our

strategy because the goal is a fundamental nature change through the elimination of the culture of moral duplicity. This institutional component strategy must be implemented first in order to start the cultural changes necessary to enable the implementation of the second strategy. Any attempts at serious individual ethical development in the current environment would be a waste of time and resources and only serve to create more cynicism. However, once transformation efforts have been initiated, comprehensive, cradle-to-grave, mastery-focused programs should be developed to enable individual ethical competence.

Organizational Change

The creation and management of organizational change is daunting task that must be fully understood if it is to be successful. In his article “Background and Theory for Large Scale Organizational Change Methods,” Robert H. Rouda provides a formula for successful implementation and some stern warnings regarding the process. The formula he presents is:

Dissatisfaction x Vision x First Steps > Resistance to Change

He explains this formula in stating, “This means that three components must all be present to overcome the resistance to change in the organization: dissatisfaction with the present situation, a vision of what is possible in the future, and achievable first steps towards reaching the vision. If any of the three is zero or near zero, the product will also be zero or near zero and the resistance to change will dominate.”¹⁸¹ In a similar, but less scientific approach, Willard Goldman argues that “What the American military needs, instead [of core values], is a clearly stated vision for the kind of environment we want in the military, and an intelligible strategy, plus the collective will to strenuously pursue it.”¹⁸² His strategy can be depicted as: **Vision x Strategy x Will = Cultural Change**

Both Rouda and Goldman base the likelihood of success of organizational change efforts on the ability to create the necessary motivation for change, a picture of the desirable future condition, and a clear path from the current situation to the future end state. This methodology is the foundational framework for this research effort. The motivation and future vision has already been provided in the earlier discussion, so now it is time to examine the strategy that will provide the path to connect the motivation for change with the desired vision of organizational change.

The strategic approach to resolving the military's ethical woes is best understood through the graphical depiction in Figure 3. This representation of the major factors influencing individual moral conduct defines the totality of the moral battlespace. The influences are grouped into pre-military development, military development, military acculturation, and external influences. A quick review of the call-out boxes reveals that military moral reform efforts must be focused on the military development and military acculturation areas because of the inability to impact the other influence groups. This assessment dictates that the ethical transformation campaign plan include strategies to target the two remaining key influence groups. Through this dual strategic approach, the campaign plan effectively works to improve the military's ethical culture while focusing on the moral development of the individual warrior. Collectively, these two strategies provide the missing element needed to combine with the vision and motivation for organization change to occur.

The comprehensive nature of these recommendations, in both strategies, requires much more detail that can be provided in the confines of this work. Therefore, the intent of this section is not to produce implementation-level detail, but, instead, provide the strategic

framework with its key components. A more expansive implementation plan would be created following the adoption of the strategic framework by our military leadership.

Individual Moral Development Framework

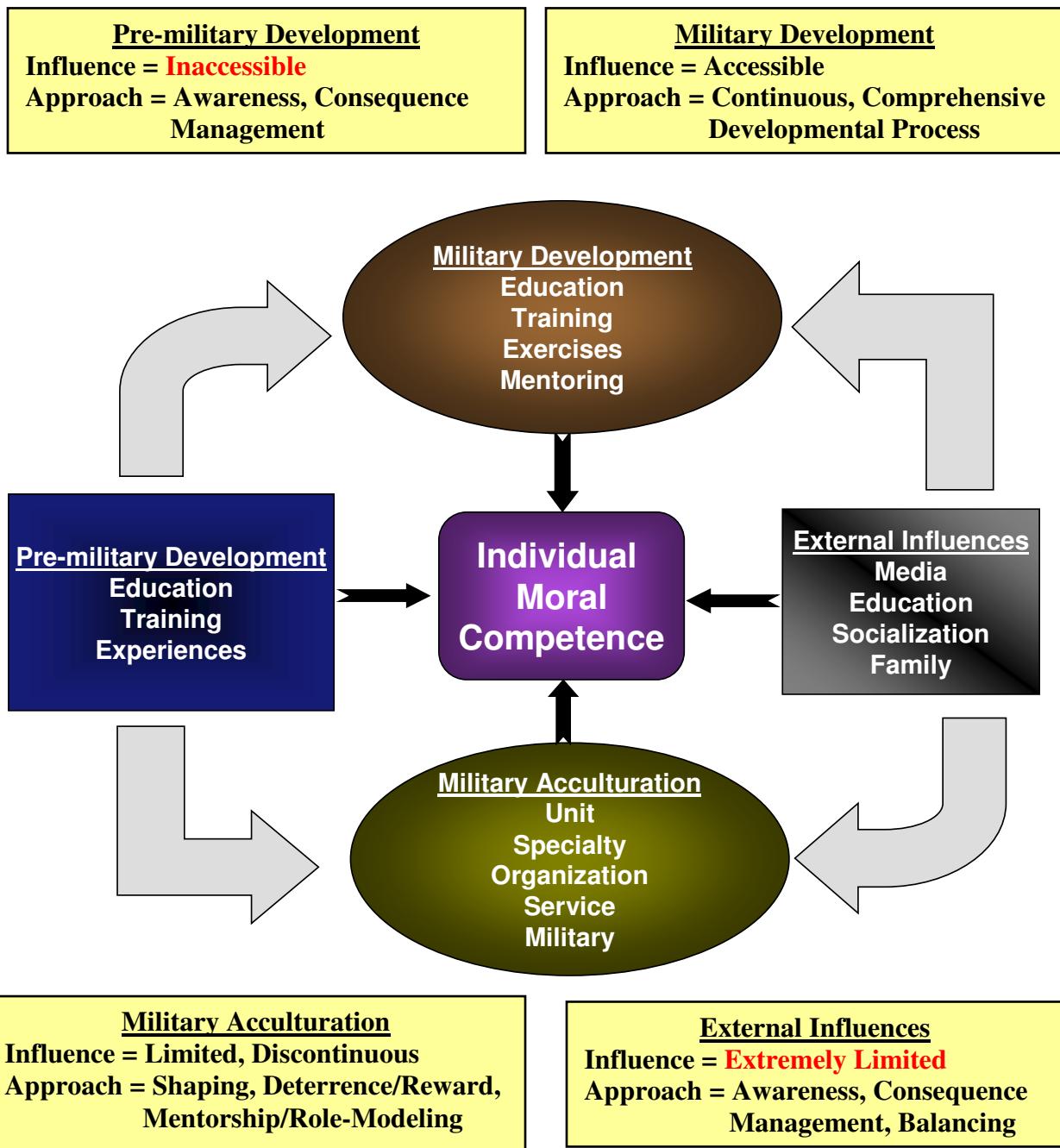


Figure 3

Strategy #1 – Institutional Transformation

[Military] transformation begins and ends with culture. Transformation is first and foremost about changing culture. Culture is about behavior—about people—their attitudes, their values, their behaviors, and their beliefs.¹⁸³

Vice Admiral Arthur K. Cebrowski

The proposed institutional transformation is a five-phased strategy focused on a gradual, but methodical, shift of the Service cultures from the negative influence of corrosive duplicity to a reinforcing environment that fosters individual ethical development. Each phase builds on the accomplishments and momentum of the previous phase(s) and, therefore, continuity of effort is essential to success. The developmental concept underpinning this strategy is best understood by looking at the five phases: (I) Recognition and Response, (II) Identification and Development, (III) Elimination and Adjustment, (IV) Education and Inculcation, (V) Reinforcement and Feedback. While only conceptual at this time, it is reasonable to conclude that complete and successful implementation of this strategy, as with any major organizational culture change effort, will require several years to complete. The overwhelming bulk of that time will transpire during the later phases when the engines of transformation have been brought on line and begin to slowly change the negative habits and practices of the leading generation and begin the creation of the new one.

Phase I – Recognition and Response

Phase one of the institutional transformation strategy is Recognition and Response. This phase encompasses: (1) the presentation of the issue of ethical concern to military leadership; (2) their recognition of the issue; (3) acknowledgement of the unsatisfactory ethical state of the force; and (4) their initial response to the issue. Of these elements, the first is the most daunting because of the difficulty in gaining access to senior decision-makers. This obstacle can be mitigated through the use of the military journals or the Joint

Services Conference on Professional Ethics (JSCOPE) as a forum to present the case. The second step in this phase should be simple given the pervasive nature of leadership comments on the need for character, integrity and accountability. Even if senior leadership is unconvinced regarding the ethical condition of the force, it is hopeful that they will remain willing to investigate the condition through other means and consider the proposed development plans.

This leads to the recommendations for leadership's initial response to the ethical woes of the profession of arms. With a full understanding that "character development is the single most difficult issue in leadership," the initial response must be significant and should include the creation of a Joint Military Ethics Task Force (JMETF).¹⁸⁴ The purpose of the task force (or panel or board or commission) is the same as it was for the Space Commission, the 9/11 Commission, and many others--to bring attention to the issue and have a group of experts evaluate the situation and make recommendations. The group should represent all the Services and Department of Defense civilians, as well as, commanders, the chaplain corps, and academia. Their primary function would be to assess the ethical fitness of the current force, the prevailing ethical nature of the military culture and the ethical demands of the current operating environment. The results of this assessment will serve as the basis for tailoring the subsequent phases of the strategy.

Phase II – Identification and Development

The second phase of the institutional transformation strategy is Identification and Development. This phase includes the task force's assessment and the development of several new ethical tools to help safeguard the institution. In completing the ethical "state of the force" assessment, the task force should focus on identifying specific organizational and

cultural components (policies, practices, programs) that are ethically corrosive. The task force should also include a thorough review of our ethical education system to determine its continuity, contribution and overall viability. This would comply with the recommendations of the recent Schlesinger Report which stated that “... a review of military ethics education programs is needed.”¹⁸⁵ Thirdly, the task force should evaluate how the Services can better monitor the ethical pulse of the organization and improve leadership’s awareness of the moral climate in the future.

In addition to the completion of the task force’s assessment, this phase includes the assessment and development of several new ethical components.

- Development of a Joint Military Code of Ethics
- Development of Joint Ethical Competence Standards
- Reestablishment of the formal military connections to the Joint Services Conference on Professional Ethics (JSCOPE)
- Evaluation of establishing a Joint Center for Excellence in Military Ethics (JCEME)*

Each of these components is needed to show the institution’s commitment to ethical change, make an immediate and visible impact on the institutional culture, and develop the organizational structure for future action.

The Joint Military Code of Ethics should be developed for the same reasons that we currently have a code of conduct for combat operations. It provides written expectations for conduct that apply 24/7/365. As the Secretary of the Army points out, “Truly ethical behavior flows from conscience, the will to do what is right and proper regardless of personal cost. In government, we aid the conscience by providing detailed standards of conduct –

* Willard Goldman in his paper “In Pursuit of Character Development: Why the Military is on the Wrong Road,” recommends transforming the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI), currently located at Patrick Air Force Base, Florida, into a Center for Character Development.

principles and rules to allay confusion that may arise in the performance of our official duties in a large and complex institution.”¹⁸⁶ This code would go well beyond the legalistic approach of the current Joint Ethics Regulation to address the adoption of behavior instead of the avoidance of wrong-doing. Numerous individuals over the last few decades have recommended codes and all of these should be evaluated in the drafting process.* Whether completely new or an adaptation from existing options, the code of ethics must provide a degree of applicability and focus on practical applications that is currently lacking in the core values approach.

In addition to the code, work should be initiated to create clear competency standards for ethical development. It is illogical to expect our commissioning sources, commanders, or military educators to hit the mark in ethical development if we are not willing to establish clear expectations of moral conduct. These standards are necessary to develop appropriate curricula and be able to assess individual progress. Once developed, these standards, much like their physical and mental counterparts, should be used in the selection process for recruits, the evaluation process for performance reports, and the selection processes for promotion and command. The true value of establishing these standards will come from the creation of the appropriate level of incentives and the consequences necessary to force their adoption. If military leadership is willing to dismiss personnel because of unacceptable weight standards or academic failures, the same enforcement culture must be applied to moral competence.

Finally, to ensure the ethical torch of the task force is carried forward, military leadership should seriously consider the establishment of the Joint Center for Excellence in

* One of the best of these suggestions is offered by Richard A. Gabriel on page 140-141 in his book To Serve with Honor: A Treatise on Military Ethics and the Way of the Soldier (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982)

Military Ethics (JCHEME). This center would allow for the consolidation of ethical expertise and promote continuity of effort in the development process. To have any reasonable expectations for our leaders to be moral exemplars and instructors, they must be provided with an institutional clearing house for ideas, products, and programs that they can use as a resource. The concept would be similar to that adopted by the Air Force Academy in the Character Development Center, and the Naval Academy's Center for the Study of Professional Military Ethics. This organization, however, would have a much broader focus and be a joint organization with representation from each of the Services. The JCHEME would serve to eliminate duplication of effort between the services, serve as a conduit for information sharing and lessons learned, and serve as the both the ethical education center and moral pulse monitor. Additionally, all of the existing piece-meal ethical programs (social actions, diversity training, Law of Armed Conflict, cultural awareness, etc.) would be consolidated under the JCHEME to promote a more cohesive presentation of these concepts. The cumulative effect of the code, competence standards, and center would be to reinforce the leadership's commitment to ethical development and continue the effort toward institutional transformation.

Phase III – Elimination and Adjustment

Initiation of phase three of institutional transformation hinges upon the findings of the ethical task force. Since it is anticipated that the results will reveal a clear need to continue implementation, this section covers the administration aspects of the Elimination and Adjustment phase. As the task force is eliminated, there must be a determination of roles and responsibilities for the follow-on actions. Clear lines must be drawn between the roles of the JCHEME, if established, the component office in the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD)

that is managing the transformation effort, and the individual commanders, chaplains, and educators. The second aspect of this phase is to take actions to mitigate or eliminate morally corrosive components. This process parallels the initial stages of spiritual development to which Oswald Chambers says, “the first essential in spiritual construction is to clear away the rubbish.”¹⁸⁷ The specific programs, practices and policies identified during the assessment phase should be targeted for elimination or adjustment during this period. Additionally, the evaluations of the existing service ethical programs will likely provide the rationale for program overhauls in the effort to improve the quality of education and to comply with the new competency standards. During this phase, the lessons from the 1970 Army War College “Study on Military Professionalism” must be kept at the forefront. “The subjects of ethics, morals, technical competence, individual motivation, and personal value systems are inextricably related, interacting, and mutually reinforcing. All of these aspects of the professional climate, taken together, produce a whole which is greater than the sum of its separate, component parts … It follows that corrective action must be based on comprehensive programs. Piecemeal actions will not suffice.”¹⁸⁸ Moral training must be provided in practical terms in conjunction with required technical training. In the end, all efforts must be focused on insuring that moral consideration is seen as a clear individual responsibility that must be internalized rather than marginalized.

This phase must also be marked by its emphasis on the role of commanders and the importance of role-modeling. We must not allow abdication of the leader’s ethical responsibilities to be a moral mentor and facilitate the creation of an ethical environment.¹⁸⁹ Another part of this adjustment period includes a conscientious effort to showcase moral exemplars as institutional role models. As Stromberg points out, “Commitment to the

teaching and learning of ethics at the bottom of the military hierarchy will sustain itself only if junior leaders see evidence of good moral reasoning at the top.”¹⁹⁰ The Services must seek to identify and hold up moral role models in ways similar to how they recognize technical expertise and physical courage. These actions must be taken in order to make moral conduct not only acceptable but commendable in our culture. It would be ideal to supplement this incentive approach with actions designed to eliminate the existing bad role models, but this, much more challenging problem, is likely best approached by simply allowing time to slowly remove these individuals from the ranks. In the same way that larger societal changes take hold through the adoption of the next generation instead of dramatic changes in the existing one, the moral development of the new generation of officers will create the momentum for change as they rise through the ranks and replace their predecessors.

The final aspect of phase three is the institutionalization of moral consideration into our major planning and decision-making processes. It is a serious omission to moral development when ethical decision-making is treated as a separate activity. As Army Field Manual 22-100 “Army Leadership” suggests, “Ethical reasoning isn’t a separate process you trot out only when you think you’re facing an ethical question. It should be part of the thought process you use to make any decision.”¹⁹¹ While this is true, it is also a reality that the absence of moral consideration in decision-making models indicates to many that it is not included because it does not belong and this often results in moral review being a collective afterthought. Unfortunately, in current processes, including the Joint Operational Planning Process (JOPP), there is no specific method for the inclusion of moral consideration. It is surprising that this process, which is designed to ensure the inclusion of all factors having

direct bearing on the validity of specific plans and decisions, either assumes or neglects moral consideration.

Due to this somewhat glaring omission, there have been numerous recommendations presented in this area in the last two decades and each should be considered during this implementation phase. One of the contributors, Lewis Sorely, notes, “... when major policy decisions are being contemplated, there ought to be a requirement for some kind of ethical and moral impact statement, similar to environmental impact statements...”¹⁹² Writers from The Pew Forum have advocated the creation of a moral review process that resembles the existing legal reviews.¹⁹³ Dwight Roblyer advocated at the 2004 JSCOPE for the creation of a moral advisory panel to address moral considerations in targeting, impact on war effort, and advocates creation of moral advisory panel.¹⁹⁴ While these recommendations would be steps in the right direction, none foster an environment in which moral consideration becomes everyone’s responsibility or is applied equally at all levels. Impact statements and advisory boards foster the perception that moral concerns are external to the process instead of being integrated. Moral consideration must be formally incorporated in the formal decision-making methods now to show its relevance and importance and so it will gradually be incorporated into everyone’s daily practices.

These ideas represent a smattering of the myriad options available for including moral consideration in the military’s official planning and decision-making processes. Collectively these actions will close out phase three and the set-up portion of the strategy. The remainder of the strategy focuses on the slow and deliberate process of cultural change and institutional reform.

Phase IV – Education and Inculcation

Education and Inculcation are the focus of the fourth phase of the institutional transformation strategy. With all of the necessary organizational structure changes complete, or, at least in progress, this phase is marked by the shaping of the existing culture, the re-education of current service members, and the shaping of the next generation of military members.* This process should be based on a focused and comprehensive communications plan through which individual unit leaders can discuss the purpose and need for ethical reform. During this process, it is imperative that the force understand that the goal is improvement, not perfection. Ethical fitness, like physical fitness, is a process that is never really complete and even those most prepared often have lapses.¹⁹⁵ It should be clear that the intent of the program is individual improvement and not just another institutional fad. The intent should be enabling individual moral action, which, as Townsend puts it, is “the result of reasoned and willful coordination between heart and mind.”¹⁹⁶ It is during this phase that the quality of ethical instructors and material will be tested. If programs lack current, practical applications, the momentum of the effort will be lost. During this period, all of the professional military education (PME) forums should be utilized to their maximum extent as feedback forums to assess the implementation process. These captive audiences are currently woefully underutilized by our leadership as a tool for generating ideas, gathering feedback, and connecting with the force. These forums will allow the implementation team to connect with the entire joint force at multiple experience levels and from every background. Another key aspect of this phase is that its initiation will also mark the starting point for the strategy

* There are numerous experts and resources that could be employed during this phase to ensure the best developmental strategies and materials are provided. One tool that is particularly noteworthy is “Fifteen Principles for the Design of College Ethical Development Programs” by Gary Pavela. This work which is a consolidation of numerous efforts provides an excellent framework and can be found at http://www.collegepubs.com/pdf/15_principles.pdf

of individual development. All of the components of this partner strategy will flow from the institutional changes made in the first three phases.

Phase V – Reinforcement and Feedback

The final phase of the institutional transformation strategy is Reinforcement and Feedback. The focus of this phase is to ensure institutional carrots and sticks are properly applied to reinforce desired and discourage unwanted behaviors. This phase should also be marked by feedback-generated tweaks to the institutional transformation game plan. This phase can be initiated relatively soon after the start of phase four because, as with all new programs in the military, feedback is likely to be abundant and clear. It is imperative that capable feedback mechanisms be in place to demonstrate institutional support for the transformation effort and the desire for feedback. The duration of this phase is indeterminate because its length would be based upon achievement of the desired end-state. This end-state would be codified during the initial phases of the process to clearly define the expected individual competence levels and the specific organizational culture and process changes that need to occur. This phase would see the full development of the ethical plans and programs within each of the Services and the maturation of the JCHEME as the key institutional body.

The five phase institutional transformation plan is designed to enable the creation of ethically competent joint warriors. This first strategy enables the individual development strategy, which is focused on the development of the individual warriors. Once the institutional culture has been modified to foster, rather than inhibit, moral development, the stage is set for initiation of the second strategy in the campaign.

Strategy #2 – Intentional Individual Development

There is regrettable truth to the fear that a good many academic philosophy and ethics courses are occasions where insipid lectures marry up with incomprehensible readings to give birth to staggering irrelevance.¹⁹⁷

R.J. Phillips “A Principle Within: Ethical Military Leadership”

As already mentioned, the initiation of the individual development strategy is dependent upon the initiation and successful implementation of the institutional transformation strategy. Although independent initiation is possible, the prospects for success would be similar to trying to plant a garden in the desert. Without the required environment changes, no level of investment at the individual level is likely to succeed.

Before presenting the specific elements of this strategy, it is important to look at the conceptual framework on which it is based. This strategy is needed because the Services currently have numerous piecemeal and ineffective programs, no comprehensive development plan, and little, if any, coordination between services.¹⁹⁸ This strategy hinges on two cornerstone elements: moral skill and the building block approach or the mastery process. Given the significant amount of groundwork that has already been covered on these topics, there is no intent to duplicate it here. Instead, this section will focus on the incorporation of these concepts in implementing the strategy.

The developmental strategy must be an intentional, individually focused, comprehensive process. Unlike the time phases method employed in the institutional strategy, the individual strategy can be implemented all at once and the phasing will occur naturally as individuals flow through the different implementation forums of the system. The strategy focuses development on six major stages of development: (1) Moral Foundation (2) Moral Recognition and Awareness (3) Moral Evaluation and Reasoning (4) Moral Decision-making (5) Moral Courage (6) Moral Expertise. As with almost any skill, some aspects of

the later stages will be introduced and developed early because the development process is not purely sequential. Moral decision-making and moral courage may be the capstone skills but they cannot be held in reserve while competence in the other skills is achieved.

The specifics of the developmental strategy are designed with the benefit of valuable critiques of our current development system. Preeminent among these is Dr. Toner's famous “Ten Mistakes in Teaching Ethics” article*, which is a perfect “lessons learned” document to put implementers in the right mindset when developing curricula and materials. In this work, he admonishes the reader that “... there are no shortcuts to morality. Ethical actions do not simply occur; they are the product of wisdom and virtue annealed into habit by good education.”¹⁹⁹ In addition to Toner's guidance, this strategy attempts to heed the advice of Gough who warns that too often our focus is on how to avoid the wrong; instead it should be how to want and, consequently, how to develop what is right.²⁰⁰ His powerful analogy of the gardener who spends too much time focusing on the weeds instead of caring for the flowers is directly relevant to our current military culture that is borderline obsessive about legal concerns and oblivious of declining moral aptitude. Our attempts to eliminate or minimize criminal activity have indirectly forsaken the individual and fostered an unhealthy minimalist ethical culture. Finally, this strategy has not ignored the multitude of warnings regarding the difficulty of establishing and maintaining moral standards in a multicultural society. The writings of individuals like Alexandre da Rocha[◊] and Gordon L. Campbell[†] provide sound

* Toner's article discusses common misconceptions and errors in thinking about and teaching ethics including: (1) Don't assume people start with zero ethics (2) Don't assume ethical skill either (3) Ethics is for the commanders not just the chaplains (4) Commanders create an environment and facilitate education, they should not teach because they are not the experts (5) We need moral reasoning training not checklists (6) Let the teachers teach

◊ The article “The Ethical Problem in Pluralistic Societies and Dr. Toner's “mistakes”” (Aerospace Power Journal. Maxwell AFB Spring 2001 Vol. 15) provides a good review of Dr. Toner's work and highlights the multicultural arguments.

arguments against the creation of a “single approach” method to military ethics. Together, these valuable critiques and arguments define the boundaries in which an effective strategy can be developed.

In the realm of technical development, each of the Services has developed tiered classification systems to identify the amount of education, training, and demonstrated ability individuals have in specific skill sets. This approach can be applied, just as effectively, to moral development. The apprenticeship process, in which training and education is married to experience and demonstrated competence at intermediary levels, is the basic approach on which the ethical development strategy is designed. As an example, in the Air Force, a newly commissioned pilot in the airlift community starts out as a copilot and gradually progresses over the span of 4-5 years to a first pilot, then aircraft commander, instructor pilot and possibly an evaluator pilot based upon his increasing levels of knowledge, experience, and demonstrated competence. In the future, moral competence could be assessed and tracked along side each individual’s technical skill sets and progression to subsequent phases of development would hinge upon the capability shown in the assessments. While this is a complex undertaking, conceptually it is nothing more than a mirror of the competence process that is used across the nation in allowing our children to move from one grade to the next. It is simply a matter of determining the appropriate levels of performance and creating a system to inculcate and assess those levels.

Now that the conceptual foundation of the strategy has been addressed, it is time to turn our attention to the actual phases of development in the strategy. It is important to remember in looking at this process that the proposed process is notional and program

⁺ Campbell’s “Of Reason, Morality, and Ethics: The Way of Effective Leadership in a Multicultural Society” which can be found at www.usafa.af.mil/jscope/JSCOPE96/Campbell96.html Argues against cultural or religious based moral codes and argues for consensus based systems using reason and logic

specifics and structure would likely be significantly refined by the experts incorporated in the JCHEME.

Phase I - Moral Foundation*

The first phase of this strategic development process is the laying of the moral foundation. For everyone entering military service today, a great deal of work in this area, positive or negative, has already occurred. The basic understanding of right and wrong, good and evil and the concepts of values have already been absorbed through observation and practice even if there were no formal attempts at ethical development. The key to the moral foundation phase is being able to assess where individuals are in their moral development and assess the congruence of existing values and principles in relation to Service standards. For those that think this process appears draconian, I would argue that we have been conducting these kinds of assessments for quite a while and, in fact, our approach to gender, racial, and religious tolerance is a perfect example of the Services attempting to assess, educate and train our personnel to an ethical standard of behavior. The critical components of this process would be our accession/commissioning sources and our basic level professional military education. It should be the responsibility of the Reserve Officer Training Corps, Officer Training School, the military academies, and basic training to develop a common framework for the moral foundation and establish common inculcation methods. This effort will be executed at the individual institutions but there must be a significant push from senior joint leadership for this to be a reality. The bottom line for this phase of development is to ensure that all military members are equipped with a clear understanding of the basic concepts of ethics and morality, what their Service's expectations

* Although focused on children, the moral development steps presented in Steven Carr Reuben's book Raising Ethical Children provide a good framework for commanders to use in the intentional moral development of their warriors.

are in this realm, and how their competence in this arena is part of their professional responsibility.

Phase II – Moral Awareness

The second phase of development focuses on moral recognition and awareness. This phase is designed to foster the ability to quickly discern ethical components of a situation or issue. In essence, this is the practical application of phase one. Real world scenarios and hypothetical case studies are perfect tools to reinforce the foundational understanding provided in phase one and assess the capacity for consistent recognition by the individuals. This process also helps to ensure that members have the ability to separate moral considerations from political, social, legal and other issues that are pertinent to a decision, but all too often obscure the key moral components of an issue. The culmination of moral awareness training comes with the full realization of the pervasive nature of moral factors in daily interaction and the capability to consistently recognize them.

Phase III - Moral Reasoning

Once an individual has been provided the basic foundation and demonstrated their ability to consistently identify the moral components of human interaction, the challenge is to transfer their awareness into critical reasoning skills. As former-POW and Navy Admiral James Stockdale states, good leaders “need to be moralists-not just poseurs who...exhort me to be good, but thinkers who elucidate what the good is.”²⁰¹ In order to accomplish this task, development during this phase focuses on providing the warrior with the mental ethical tools needed to evaluate the moral obligations, competing values, and potential outcomes associated with a particular situation. The model provided by George Chauncey could be beneficial during this development because he provides a way to deconstruct moral judgment

into four key components. His depiction of moral judgment as consisting of the person, the perception, the principles, and the procedure is instructive and allows us to clearly define what is being assessed and against what standard.²⁰² Obviously this is only one of many approaches that could be selected to convey the approach to moral consideration. Additionally, although controversial to some, education on and discussion of the role of conscience should be presented as an evaluation tool during this phase. As Thomas E. Hill, Jr. points out in his “Conscience and Authority” speech at the Air Force Academy in 1996, conscience has two important roles in our lives: judging and prodding. In our daily activities, conscience alerts us to the contradiction between what we are doing and what we should be doing.²⁰³ Professor Hill emphasizes that the conscience has a unique role in assisting our logical evaluation processes that ensures more consistent moral behavior. The “voice of conscience appears without invitation: it warns, threatens, prods, and punishes us even when the last thing we want is to engage in serious moral self-appraisal.”²⁰⁴ “Conscience is not a substitute for moral reasoning and judgment, but in fact presupposes these.”²⁰⁵ McKenzie builds on this argument by stating that “innate morality must be buttressed by education and practical experience, in making the tough choices.”²⁰⁶ Oswald Chambers echoes the endorsement of the conscience as an effective moral tool, but warns that the tool is only as strong as the moral foundation of the individual employing it. He states “Intuition in the natural world is the power to see things at a glace without reasoning … the accuracy of intuitive judgment is in proportion to the moral culture of the one who judges.”²⁰⁷ During this third phase of development, the goal is not only to create a robust ethical toolkit for the warrior and ensure he is able to employ it, but also to strengthen the awareness of and ability to utilize the internal moral guidance system of the conscience. As Charles Pfaff pointed out

in his 2003 article in *Military Review*, an “officer must develop the ability to reason well” and this is essential because it is only through the development of this reasoning capability that we can expect to have success in the crucible of moral decision-making.²⁰⁸

Phase IV – Moral Decision-making

In the military decision-making process (MDMP), all of the work of assessing the environment and determining potential courses of actions (COA) culminate when the time comes to determine what action will be taken. In the same way, the credibility of each individual’s moral awareness and moral reasoning is tested when the time comes to evaluate moral COAs in light of relevant American and military values to make the right decision. Moral decision-making consists not only in the selection of a proper course of action, but also in the ability to successfully justify the selection. It is, however, essential not to become too academic during this phase and lose touch with the essence of the expected decision environment. As Hartle points out, “War is not a series of case studies that can be scrutinized with objectivity. It is a series of stark confrontations that must be faced under the most emotion-wrenching situations.”²⁰⁹ Additionally, while it is necessary to remind our warriors that split-second decision-making may be required and that it is extremely challenging, they need to know that the majority of ethical decisions they will face do not demand the quick-draw decision that is so pervasive in our daily processes. Instead, when ethical factors are discovered, they must learn to be patient and methodical in order to avoid succumbing to the “tyranny of the urgent” or the seductive pull of military necessity. The capacity for rapid moral judgment and the need for it do not often intersect in our daily lives.

The core instruction during this phase must be focused on how to make ethical decisions, not what decisions to make. None of the decisions can be divorced from their

consequences, but it is essential to not allow principle to be eclipsed by consequence in assessing the individual's decision-making. While there are situations with "correct" answers from the nation's and profession's perspective, the intent is not to teach those answers. The intent is to cause the individual to see their decisions in relation to the values, expectations, and operational impact on the greater organization. Once the individual is endowed with the skills necessary to understand, identify, assess, and make decisions on moral matters, the next phase is to instill or strengthen the internal fortitude needed to take these actions in light of significant peer, institutional, and environmental pressures.*

Phase V – Moral Courage

If moral decision-making was easy, there would be no justification for devoting an entire phase of development to moral courage. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Moral courage is essential because without it the decision maker is as hamstrung as the coward on the physical battlefield; unwilling and unable to move forward because concern for self has overwhelmed the concern for the greater good. Moral courage is the ability and willingness to consistently confront immoral policies, practices, and people with a full knowledge of the dangers. As defined by Rushworth Kidder, moral courage is a "three-stranded braid that defines morally courageous action – commitment to principles, awareness of the danger in supporting those principles, and a willing endurance of the danger."²¹⁰ He argues that there are three ways to teach moral courage: (1) discourse and discussion, (2) modeling and mentoring, (3) practice and persistence.²¹¹ This development process for moral courage follows the same overall mastery process of our individual ethical development and would be

* At the 2000 Joint Services Conference on Professional Ethics (JSCOPE), Desiree Verweij, Gerard Cloin, and Erhan Tanercan presented the paper "Ethical Decision-Making in the Military Decision-Making Process." This article (www.usafa.af.mil/jscope/JSCOPE00/Verweij00.html) presents a good example of a useable ethical decision-making model.

perfectly complementary in the training process. Although some may label it overly idealistic to think that moral courage can be created in all of our warriors, just as it would be with physical courage, this phase of development will at least help them to understand what it is, why it is required and provide them with solid examples of moral role models.

The success of the institutional transformation strategy becomes the most critical during this phase of individual development. If a significant moral climate change has not occurred, the probability of successful inculcation of moral courage is highly unlikely except in the most resolute individuals. Exhibiting moral courage will never be an easy task, but institutional reaction to its exercise must be reinforcing, at least through official channels. As Phillips points out in “A Principle Within: Ethical Military Leadership,” our problem lies in not rewarding moral courage.²¹² While the military may never make moral heroes on par with its physical courage role-models, even minor improvements will go a long way in reinforcing the desired behaviors. Through initial development, regular practice and institutional support, moral courage will slowly become more of a common practice and less of an anomaly in the military profession. When intentional effort is made to achieve and sustain these skills, the individual develops moral mastery or expertise.*

Phase VI – Moral Expertise

As alluded to earlier, moral expertise is not so much a phase of development as it is the result of successful development in the previous phases. Moral expertise is a transitory state that can be quickly lost without renewed effort. Unlike many technical or academic skills, which can be neglected for weeks, months or, in some cases, even years without significant degradation, moral skills can erode in a very brief period of time. While physical strength,

* Rushworth Kidder and Martha Bracy in their paper “Moral Courage: A White Paper” from the Institute for Global Ethics (www.globalethics.org) provide a clear definition of moral courage, explain why it matters, how it enables other virtues and provides practical guidance on how to instill moral courage

marksmanship, and language skills do feel the impact of neglect, there are no direct opposing forces that are undermining the capability when it is not being exercised. The moral skill set, on the other hand, is constantly being challenged and can be seriously eroded when the warrior chooses not to engage in its preservation. Moral challenges occur hour by hour and are highly unpredictable, thereby requiring a constant state of readiness. Moral abdication or failure, even for short periods of time, undermines this readiness. As Oswald Chambers points out, “Every gain on the wrong side undoes the effect of many conquests on the right.” To make his point, he states “The idea is that of winding up a ball of wool. Let the ball drop and infinitely more is undone than was wound in the same time.”²¹³ The concept means that with every passing moral engagement we are either reinforcing or undermining our moral development. If we continue to undermine it, Chambers argues that “Men retain their natural quickness and cleverness while their reason and judgment are allowed to go to ruin, and thus they do work their minds … but it is the undisciplined mind which they are exercising, instead of one wisely disciplined.”²¹⁴

Moral expertise is the culmination of individual effort, institutional support, and intentional development. It is neither a simple, nor a short process, but it is a development cycle that can and should be created. Moral competence is the natural counterpart to technical skill in the profession of arms and its inculcation should be treated as such. The developmental strategy that has been presented is designed to develop the judgment and enable the experience to ensure all warriors are capable and willing to discover and follow the truth that is essential to proper professional conduct as America’s warriors.

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¹⁹⁶ Townsend.

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¹⁹⁸ Willard D. Goldman, *In Pursuit of Character Development: Why the Military is on the Wrong Road* accessed at <http://atlas.usafa.af.mil/jscope/JSCOPE96/goldman96.html> on 1 Sep 05) 2.

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²⁰⁴ Hill 11.

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²⁰⁷ Chambers 49.

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Chapter X

Conclusion – A Clear and Present Danger

If the first half-decade of the twenty-first century is any indication of the years to come, American warriors have daunting challenges ahead in all realms of the profession of arms, but none as pervasive and consequential as those in the moral sphere. Superior physical preparation and technological dominance are a phenomenal combination that must be balanced by equally superior moral competence. The difference between the U.S. military becoming an effective force for good in the world with the trust and support of the American people and experiencing moral failures in information age war or losing faith with the American people hinges on the willingness of Service leadership to acknowledge the importance of moral competence and take action to ensure its formation.

The ability to take the necessary steps in the ethical realm depends upon our willingness to acknowledge some long-standing realities about human behavior and some unpleasant realities about the current moral health of our profession. The erroneous tendency to marginalize moral concerns and the propensity for viewing them and military necessity as opposing forces are dangerous and must be eliminated from military culture. Additionally, it must be recognized that morally competent warriors are essential to the health of the military profession and its ability to properly serve in support of a democratic society. This competence is a definable and developable skill set that must be fostered by our military services. The current barriers to moral development are significant, but they must be overcome to support the demands of public trust, the future of the profession, the nature of the current combat environment and the health of our warriors.

The Department of Defense has staked our nation's future security on its ability to appropriately transform itself into the fighting force best suited to defending America's national interests and enabling our nation to serve as a force for good in the world. The missing element in this plan is a focus on the moral development of the individual Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines, which comprise the very core of America's military strength. The moral dimensions of the human weapon system must be addressed through an institutional moral culture transformation and a shift to focus on individual moral development. The dual strategy approach that has been presented provides an initial action plan to aid in the design and implementation of the required developmental and cultural changes within the Services. The time-phased processes of Recognition, Development, Adjustment, Education, and Reinforcement found in the Institutional Cultural campaign provide the guidelines for clearing the rubbish from the military's ethical landscape and the initiation of organizational reform. In parallel to this effort, the Individual Moral Development campaign provides a systematic approach to take each warrior through the process of developing a common moral foundation, creating moral awareness, developing moral reasoning and decision-making skills, and fostering the formation of moral courage to achieve the desired level of moral expertise. The adoption of these plans will provide a template for essential initial actions and aid in generating the momentum and vector necessary for the early stages of the change effort. Once the institutional inertia has been overcome, the specifics of this suggested framework may well be discarded as the expertise of professional ethicists and educators coalesce to form the moral engine of transformation. The success or failure of this effort in creating an awareness of the existing moral problems

and generating the motivation necessary to create change will dictate the likely future path of American military professionalism.

Great strides may be made in making our military lighter, leaner, and faster, but failure to make the requisite moral improvements places our warriors in a situation, in which, billion dollar platforms and flattened organizational structures will not help in dealing with the moral demands placed on them in garrison or in combat. The challenge to train and equip our warriors for ethical challenges has to go beyond the publication of hollow service values and the minimal legal ethic that is evidenced today. This approach to playing ethics is a disservice to our warriors and the nation that supplies and supports them. We must not allow the underlying competence which has traditionally been one of America's greatest strengths to become her greatest liability. It is time to finally acknowledge the existing conditions and take action to correct them through the implementation of the proposed ethical transformation campaign plan.

“It is possible to dodge moral responsibilities: it is not possible to avert the consequences of dodging these responsibilities.”²¹⁵

- K.F. McKenzie, Jr.

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²¹⁵ K.F. McKenzie, Jr., "Deputies of Zeus", Proceedings July 1991 pg. 61

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

- Research should be done into the evolution, structure, approach and effectiveness of organizational ethical development centers. For the military, this would involve examining the Character Development Center (CDC) at the United States Air Force Academy and the Center for Military Ethics at the United States Naval Academy. Exterior to the military, it would be beneficial to look at the emergence, organization, approach, and products organizations such as the Institute for Global Ethics (<http://www.globalethics.org/index.htm>), the Josephson Institute of Ethics (<http://www.josephsoninstitute.org/>), the Ethics Resource Center (<http://www.ethics.org/>) and Ethics Quality (<http://www.ethicsquality.com/>) other recognized centers of ethical expertise.
- Research should be done to examine the various methods for assessing individual moral development and organizational moral health with a specific focus on the military. This research should determine the best tools and methods for conducting the assessments and the predicted reliability for the results.
- Additional research should be done to examine the relative effectiveness of religious and secular value systems. Specifically, are religious adherents any further developed or more consistent in their moral competence than their secular counterparts? Are religious and secular value systems as incompatible as many have claimed or is it simply a matter of different entering assumptions?
- Additional research should be done on the process of ethical culture transformation with a specific focus on the optimal order of steps within the change process and the expected duration of the process depending upon the size and starting condition of the organization.

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AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Major John F. Price, Jr., was born on 27 May 1971, in Hopewell, Virginia. He graduated from Prince George High School in 1989 and attended the United States Air Force Academy, where he graduated in 1993 as a distinguished military graduate with a Bachelor of Science degree in Political Science.

Major Price completed undergraduate pilot training at Vance Air Force Base, Oklahoma in 1994, and proceeded to his first operational flying assignment in the Boeing KC-135R Stratotanker at Malmstrom Air Force Base, Montana. In 1996, he moved with his unit to MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, where he deployed in support of Operations DELIBERATE GUARD and DENY FLIGHT in the former Republic of Yugoslavia and NORTHERN WATCH over Iraq. Major Price moved to Grand Forks Air Force Base, North Dakota, in 1998, where he upgraded to aircraft commander and instructor pilot in the KC-135. While there, he deployed to support Operations NORTHERN WATCH, DESERT FOX, and DESERT THUNDER against Iraq and Operation ALLIED FORCE in Kosovo. In 1999, he attended Squadron Officer School where he received the Commandant's trophy as the number one graduate of 698 students. Major Price was selected for the Air Force Intern Program in 2000, and he worked on the Joint Staff and in the Secretary of the Air Force's Action Group while completing a Master of Arts in Organizational Management at The George Washington University. At the completion of this program in 2002, Major Price was selected for the Air Force's crossflow program and he went to flight training for the Boeing C-17 Globemaster III. During this time, he completed his Master of Arts in Management through Regent University and then proceeded to McChord Air Force Base, Washington. While there, Major Price served as a flight commander, assistant operations officer and chief

of the wing commander's action group. He flew numerous C-17 missions in support of Operations ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM and other operations around the globe. In 2005, Major Price was selected to attend the Joint Advanced Warfighting School, where he is currently completing a Masters of Science in Joint Campaign Planning and Strategy.

Major Price is married to the former Stephanie Elaine Parsons who is currently a major in the Air Force Reserves and serves as a liaison officer for the United States Air Force Academy. They have been married for eleven years and have two children, a five-year old daughter, Margaret Lauren, and a three-year old son, Joshua Alexander. Major Price has over 2,800 flying hours with over 450 combat hours from 90 combat missions.

